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Framing the Fight:  
Women's Use of Rhetorical Coercion to Gain Political Empowerment from  
Revolutionary Participation.  
The Cases of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Eritrea

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A Thesis

Presented To

The Faculty of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies  
University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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By

Kyleanne M. Hunter

June 2014

Advisor: Dr. Deborah Avant

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Title: Framing the Fight: Women's Use of Rhetorical Coercion to Gain Political Empowerment during Revolutionary Participation. The Cases of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Eritrea

Advisor: Dr. Deborah Avant

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## **ABSTRACT**

The below paper examines women's ability to translate participation in anti-government movement into political empowerment in the post-conflict government. I use the theory of Rhetorical Coercion to explore how the way in which women frame their participation impacts their ability to achieve increased political empowerment. I find that nationalistic frames are more successful than women's-specific frames in women's ability to achieve full empowerment and lasting rights. Using the cases of El Salvador, Guatemala and Eritrea I explore the inputs to a successful rhetorical strategy and the stumbling blocks to translating participation into national inclusion.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Most of the studies looking at the impact of violent intrastate conflict on gender have focused on the either how gender inequality contributes to conflict or disproportionally disadvantages women as the “forgotten victims,”<sup>1</sup> or how women are natural contributors to the peace process. However, particularly since the end of the Cold War, women are frequently parties to violent intrastate conflict or revolutionary movements, increasingly acting as combatants.<sup>2</sup> Little work has been done to explore the impact of this participation on their life post-conflict. I have taken up one piece of the question – the way in which women’s participation in violent revolutionary movements and the subsequent negotiated settlements can influence their post-conflict political empowerment. Drawing on Ronald Krebs’ theory of Rhetorical Coercion, I argue that when women are able to frame their revolutionary participation in nationalistic (as opposed to feminist) terms, they are more likely to successfully employ rhetorical coercion to gain expanded political enfranchisement. It is thus not just participation that allows women to gain the benefits of political empowerment, but the proper *framing* of their participation in such a way that the political elite cannot deny their claims to an

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<sup>1</sup> Caprioli, Mary. *Gender Equality and Civil Wars*. Working Paper #8, Syracuse: CPR, 2003

<sup>2</sup> Allison, Miranda. "Women as Agents of Political Violence: Gendering Security." *Security Dialogue* 35, no. 1 (December 2004): 447-463.

expanded political role. When women are able to successfully frame themselves as performing civic duties that are vital to the national interest, they are most likely to be able to fully engage in the republican discourse of citizenship. In such cases, women have been better able to secure rights and promote their interests in the long run, as they have gained an equal voice in shaping national priorities. When representing themselves as responding solely to the needs or rights of women, despite short-term concessions, women lose the strength of nationalistic appeal, and provide an opportunity for the government to deny, or excuse away, full national empowerment. Simply stated, women are better able to secure their interests in the long run by promoting the national interest and fully adopting the national identity, rather than adhering to a purely feminist ideology and rhetoric.

By examining the cases of women during the revolutions in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Eritrea I will show that women are most successful at achieving post-conflict political enfranchisement when they frame their service as vital for the creation of a new national identity, and frame themselves as equal citizens, committed to the promotion of nationalism and national security. When women fully integrate themselves into the national identity forged during revolutionary change, they create a scenario in which the newly formed government cannot deny their claims for increased political participation without undermining the revolution's central characteristics. Though a specific focus on women's issues are initially put aside, the lasting political gains made allow women greater influence and leadership opportunities, ultimately creating an opportunity for women's equality to be interwoven into the national agenda.



Conversely, when women use their revolutionary participation to craft a purely “women’s space” in society or for the promotion of politics that only target “women’s issues,” it gives the newly formed government an opening to deny or excuse away claims to increased political participation. Creating spaces in government to solely address women’s affairs, reinforces women’s status as a marginalized out-group. Though immediate gains that better women’s status in society may be made, in the long run women are hindered from taking advantage of the full complement of political opportunities.

The study of women’s participation in government is a recent addition to the field of political science. Work done by Valerie Hudson, Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, Mary Caprioli and Chad Emmett<sup>3</sup> has done much empirically to show the benefits of women’s egalitarian participation in government to state security and stability, especially in newly stabilized post-conflict states. However, large gaps still exist in both the theoretical and practical literature addressing how women become involved in the political arena. And while there is an increased interest in highlighting narratives of women’s participation in revolutionary movements,<sup>4</sup> little has been done examining how they can translate

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<sup>3</sup> The collaborative work *Sex and World Peace* and the creation of WomanState project (<http://womanstats.org>) represents the first large-scale effort towards collecting data on women’s participation in government, laws effecting women’s security, and the relationship between these and state security. For individual articles discussing this see: Caprioli, Mary. *Gender Equality and Civil Wars*. Working Paper #8, Syracuse: CPR, 2003; Caprioli, Mary. "Gender Equality and State Aggression: The Impact of Domestic Gender Equality on State First Use of Force." *International Interactions*, no. 29 (2003): 195-214; Caprioli, Mary, Valerie M. Hudson, Rose McDermott, Chad F Emmett, and Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill. "Putting Women in their Place." *Baker Journal of Applied Public Policy* 1, no. 1 (2007): 12-22.; Hudson, Valerie M. "Sex, War, and Peace: Rank, and Winter on Rank." *Political Psychology* 31, no. 1 (2010): 33-38; Hudson, Valerie M., and Andrea M Den Boer. "Missing Women and Bare Branches: Gender Balances and Conflict." *Environmental Change and Security Program Report*, no. 11 (2005): 20-24

<sup>4</sup> See, for example: Goldstein, Joshua S. *War and Gender*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001; Gonzalez, Victoria, and Karen Kampwirth. *Radical Women in Latin America: Left and Right*.

revolutionary participation into increased political empowerment. Filling these gaps is necessary for both the advancement of scholarship and to aid practitioners looking to ensure women gain the benefits of being involved in post-conflict governments. As women are becoming increasingly essential to revolutionary and anti-government movements<sup>5</sup> it is important to understand how their efforts are successfully translated into participation that benefits both the state as a whole and the status of women.

I present my argument surrounding women's ability to use rhetorical coercion to enhance their post-revolutionary political empowerment as follows. I first introduce the idea of rhetorical coercion, and explore its essential components, focusing on how it can be applied to revolutionary movements. Next, I briefly trace the theoretical history of women's participation in the public arena, highlighting the divergent views of the essentialist and constructivist feminist paradigms, and evaluating their validity as explanatory tools. I continue exploring feminist political theory in examining the evolution of the study of women's participation in political violence, and the problems traditional explanations bring to the study of women's revolutionary and political participation. I combine women's-specific studies with broader theories of revolutions, paying particular attention to the way in which revolutions impact the status quo social and civic order, in order to create a framework for revolutions onto which we can apply the model of rhetorical coercion. Applying this model, I next explore three cases – El Salvador, Guatemala, and Eritrea – to demonstrate how women are able to reap political

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University Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 200; Tetreault, Mary Ann. *Women and Revolution*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994.

<sup>5</sup> Diaz, Pablo Castillo, and Simon Tordjman. *Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Connections between Presence and Influence*. Report, New York: UN Women, 2012.

benefits from rhetorical coercion when framing their revolutionary participation in a new national identity or as part of the broad national interest, and fall short when focused solely on women's issues. I conclude with a summery of my findings, and include a roadmap for further research to close the gap in literature on how women can successfully achieve greater political empowerment.

### **Rhetorical Coercion in Brief**

The concept of rhetorical coercion, introduced by Ronald Krebs,<sup>6</sup> outlines a means by which a minority out-group can frame military service to demand increased political and citizenship rights. Rhetorical coercion is most successful societies engaging in a republican discourse, as it is tied to the republican ideal of military service as the epitome of civic duty. This notion, dating back to the writings of Machiavelli, is predicated on the idea that the best defense of a state is via local forces, and the essential link between the citizenry and state leadership is established through dedicated and honorable national service.<sup>7</sup> This republican ideal of civic duty and virtue has remained a constant thread throughout the evolution of theoretical work on the conceptions of citizenship and political participation, as both governments and the populous have used the rhetoric of service to transition the view of the polis from "subjects" to "citizens." In tracing the evolution of state military composition, Deborah Avant highlights how the Enlightenment ideas surrounding the citizen - government social contract reinforced the

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<sup>6</sup> Krebs, Ronald. *Fighting for Rights: Military Service and the Politics of Citizenship*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince*. Ontario: Prohyptikon Publishing, 2009.

use of citizen armies as a means of shaping the individual's relationship with the state.<sup>8</sup> Governments have also used military service as a tool to shape the nature and identity of the state, and instill a sense of national belonging. Using the idea that "liberty and personal glory has been promised for those who distinguished themselves in battle,"<sup>9</sup> government and citizens alike have frequently framed much of their dialogue on citizenship and belonging with the notion that military service is the greatest embodiment of civic duty. For states adhering to this republican ideal, military service gives minority out-groups a strong claim to greater citizenship rights.

The transition from military service to greater citizenship rights is not, however, automatic or guaranteed. Rather, it relies on a series of societal and governmental preconditions that, in addition to republican discourse, open the door for rhetorical dialogue. Rhetorical coercion works best in societies that exhibit what Leah Greenfield and Jonathan Eastwood describe as "strong horizontal cohesion" among the polis.<sup>10</sup> Such societies have cohesive national identity and a common means of describing this identity that minority groups can channel and use to shape their claims making. Crosscutting national identity rhetoric provides the means for minority groups to frame their demands in such a way that they more quickly and wholly become adopted by the majority

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<sup>8</sup> Avant, Deborah. "From Mercenary to Citizen Armies: Explaining Change in the Practice of War." *International Organization* 54, no. 1 (2000): 41-72.

<sup>9</sup> Burke, James. "Theories of Democratic Civil-Military Relations." *Armed Forces & Society* 29, no. 1 (2002): 7-29.

<sup>10</sup> Greenfield, Liah, and Jonathan Eastwood. "National Identity." In *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, by Susan Stokes and Carles Boix, 256-273. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

group.<sup>11</sup> Framing rhetorical claims to national citizenship rights in these crosscutting terms both garners support for the claimant, and makes it harder for the government to deny the claims without undermining the national identity. Such a cohesive national identity also provides a broader base to which minority groups can appeal. In a society that values republican discourse, national identity is so closely tied to civic duty that in order to refuse claims rooted in national service and framed as integral to the national identity, the government must either act counter to the basic principles of the state, or create an entirely new identity.

Participation in revolutionary movements can furnish many of the same rhetorical gains as military service. Figure 1 traces the process through which revolutionary service can be translated into political participation via rhetorical coercion.

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<sup>11</sup> Lyons, Terrance, and Peter Mandaville. "Think Locally, Act Globally: Towards a Transnational Comparative Politics." *International Political Sociology*, no. 4 (2010): 124-141.

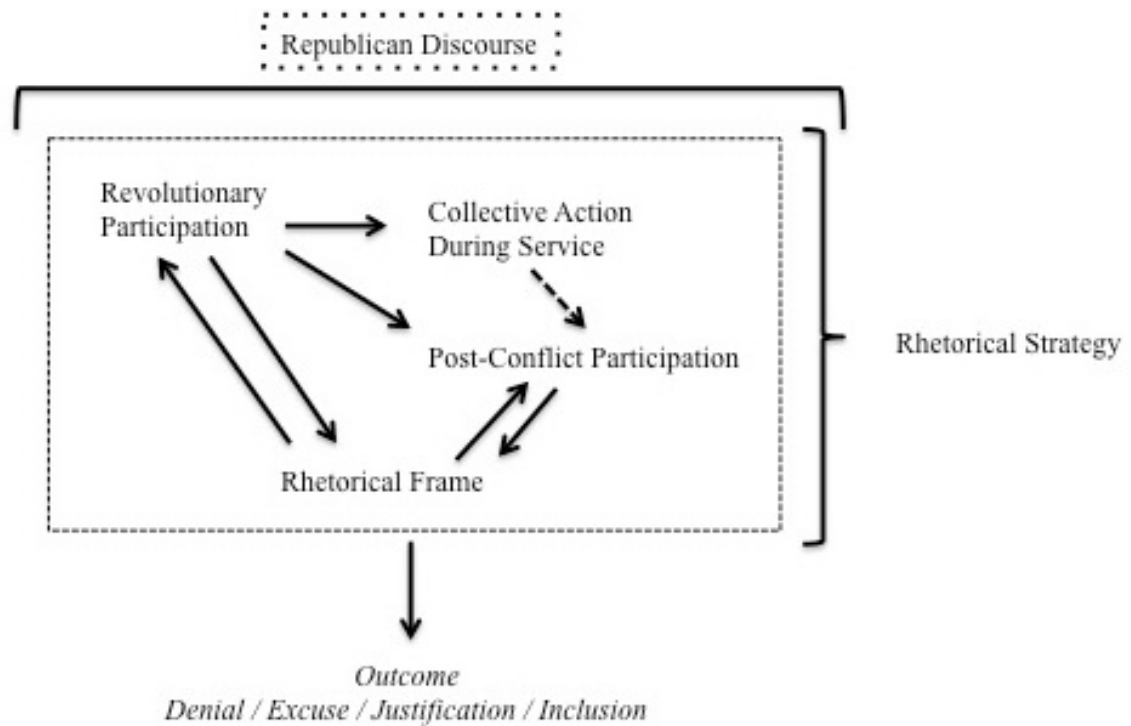


FIGURE 1: Components of Rhetorical Coercion

Central to successful rhetorical coercion is the ability to craft an advantageous rhetorical strategy that properly frames service both during the revolution and in its immediate aftermath. The ability to show that a group's participation in the revolution was vital for the existence of the new nation is a cornerstone on which proper framing of rhetorical coercion rests. For participants in a revolutionary movement to take advantage of rhetorical coercion, a republican discourse must be established early in the revolutionary process. An early claim to a place in this discourse creates the basis for guaranteeing rights in the post-revolutionary society.

The interaction between the ability to frame the rhetoric of service and participation during and in the immediate aftermath of the conflict is based largely on the nature of the polis. Appeals for government inclusion are strongest when framed in such a way that they resonate with the majority of the population. As a framing technique, the

nature of the polis, and their ability to adapt to revolutionary social change, will directly impact the way in which a minority group is able to mobilize and appeal to a broad base. Reciprocally, this mobilization and mass appeal may influence the nature of the rhetorical frame. The dynamic nature of revolutionary ideology means that the most effective rhetorical frame may change frequently throughout the conflict, requiring adaptation on the part of the out-group to maintain a rhetorical strategic advantage. A continuation of proper framing during participation in the conflict and the negotiations in the immediate aftermath is thus an essential component of the rhetorical strategy.

Collective action realized during participation in a movement is likely (though not necessarily) to influence the degree to and means by which a group participates in the negotiations and civic discourse post-conflict. The rhetorical frame adopted directly influences the means by which the group is able to participate in post-conflict negotiations, and successful participation in such has the ability to strengthen the rhetorical frame. If a group is able to finding common rhetorical bridges between themselves and the polis to carry from revolutionary service to post-conflict negotiations, they are most likely to create a rhetorical strategic advantage.

In exploring how rhetorical frames are created through revolutionary participation, I look to three beneficial changes individuals experience during military service that Krebs highlights in his description of rhetorical coercion that have broader application to revolutionary participation. The first of these is socialization. In military service, socialization is highlighted because service members often join the military during their “most formative years,”<sup>12</sup> exposing them to people from varying

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<sup>12</sup> Krebs, 2006.

backgrounds, regions and religious who all share a common nationalistic focus. In revolution, combat participation is more emblematic of Krebs' "school of the nation" assertion than regular military service, as it is through socialization that the new national identity is solidified. The unity of effort required in revolutionary movements allows them to introduce new norms and create a new social dialogue into which minority groups can easily insert themselves as a result of their participation. Socialization thus provides the basis for minority groups to understand the most effective means by which to disseminate their importance to the movement to a broad base, increasing the appeal of their chosen rhetorical frame.

Second is contact among previously segregated groups. The rigors of combat force individuals of varying backgrounds to not only work together for a common cause, but to truly learn how to understand and communicate with one another. This communication and deep understandings can lead to preconceived stereotypes being abandoned in favor of new judgments based on the merits of action. Participation in revolutionary movements thus gives minority groups an opportunity to be fairly judged on their capabilities rather than their pre-revolutionary societal role. Social change is accelerated as a result of contact between and among revolutionary participants, and provides another framing mechanism for coercive rhetoric.

Finally, Krebs argues that military service is important for formation of a new political elite. In a republican-minded polis, the time spent in the military "shapes the communal orientation of future political leaders who are particularly well positioned to set the boundaries of nationality."<sup>13</sup> This individual characteristic of military, or

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<sup>13</sup> Krebs, 2006.



revolutionary, service is essential for understanding how post-conflict participation can be framed to shape increased political gains. As revolutions are times of change, they afford a unique opportunity for previously excluded groups to exhibit leadership characteristics, and assume new influential roles in civic life. Leadership in combat sends a strong signal to the polis that one can be a successful leader in society post-combat. Furthermore, since post-conflict negotiations are frequently conducted by “the most powerful actors” in a conflict,<sup>14</sup> it behooves minority groups to set themselves apart as leaders of the movement as a whole, rather than just of their group, to gain the benefits of leadership roles in the post-conflict negotiations.

The strength of rhetorical advantage is additionally predicated on the ability of the government or political elite to reverse, or renege, the claims made by the minority group. This is most applicable in situations in which minority groups have experienced increased formal inclusion during the time of revolution, or have received external validation of the importance of their contribution. Recognized and validated participation provides a strong bargaining chip for the group when demanding increased political inclusion. The most successful framing of formally recognized or validated service presents in such a way that the *cost* of reversing this inclusion, thereby going back to the pre-revolutionary status quo, is so high that the elites do not see it in their best interest to do so. The group’s appeal to both domestic and international audiences is useful in validating their service and increasing the costs of reversing their claims.

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<sup>14</sup> Higley, John, and Michael G Burton. "The Elite Variable in Democratic Transitions and Breakdowns." *American Sociological Review*, no. 54 (2005): 17-32.

The goal of properly framing the rhetoric of service is to gain advantage through a sound rhetorical strategy. A successful rhetorical strategy ensures that the government cannot deny or excuse the group's claims without undermining some central tenant of national rhetoric. In its most simplified sense, an advantage has been gained when the government cannot deny participation-based claims without undermining their basic republican nature or discriminatorily cutting one group out of the republican discourse. When faced with a rhetorical claim, governments have four options in how to respond: denial, justification, excuse or inclusion. These outcomes are not mutually exclusive. Governments may both deny that any formal discrimination existed previously while simultaneously justifying its current exclusionary policies or excuse away the consequences of this discrimination. However, if service is properly framed to gain rhetorical advantage, inclusion will be the most likely outcome.

### **Women's Traditional Barriers to the Public Arena**

Applying the notion of rhetorical coercion to women's revolutionary service necessitates a brief overview of historical background concerning the study of women's role in the public arena. The divergence between the roles men and women have played in many societies is markedly greater than those of men of different ethnic groups. Classically, politics, both domestic and international, has been the realm of "diplomats, soldiers, and international civil servants...[where] women would not understand the issues at stake."<sup>15</sup> Confined to the realm of the home, women in most parts of the world have been viewed as ill suited to contribute to civic life. Cultural, political and religious

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<sup>15</sup> Tickner, J. Anne. *Gender in International Relations*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1992.

traditions have been instrumental in contributing to the subordination of women by creating a sharp divide between the public and private life, and relegating women to the private. An undercurrent of highly institutionalized patriarchy runs through most societies in the world, reinforcing gender-based cultural subordination. This patriarchy ensures that “women are first located in the private sphere of the home by sexual division of labor, while men are first located in the public sphere outside the home.”<sup>16</sup> The pervasiveness of this patriarchal mold of politics has created very high barriers to entry for women.

The masculine nature of the rhetoric surrounding politics and national defense creates an additional barrier to women’s entry into the public sphere via rhetorical coercion. In her examination of the U.S. defense industry, Carol Cohn has revealed how masculine-preferenced speech serves to reinforce the patriarchal societal order.<sup>17</sup> While Cohn’s assertions are most closely linked to a traditionally Western understanding of the separation between public and private lives, European colonization and economic engagement has introduced this idea to nearly every government across the globe. Further, the historical essence of republican discourse, linking military duty to civil obligation, has perpetuated a gender-biased polis. As women have largely been banned from combat warfare, and thus not had the opportunity to gain the advantages of leadership and glory in battle, they have been denied the opportunity to experience full citizenship rights. Those who have served in battle “shape the social categories through

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<sup>16</sup> Reif, Linda L. "Women in International Guerrilla Movements: A Comparative Perspective." *Comparative Politics* 18, no. 2 (January 1986): 147-169.

<sup>17</sup> Cohn, Carol. "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals ." *Signs* 12, no. 4 (1987): 687-718.

which the populace apprehends their national world.”<sup>18</sup> With women excluded from the process by which they can influence or shape their apprehension of the national world, gaining a foothold is nearly impossible without a dramatic social change.

### **Setting the Stage for Women’s Rhetorical Claims to Citizenship**

Given the prevalence of the gender-biased societal and civic order, if women are to successfully employ rhetorical coercion, it is then necessary for them to either adopt male-biased rhetoric,<sup>19</sup> or develop a new and inclusive social and civic identity. Before discussing the possibilities for creating a new rhetoric, however, a brief examination of the divergent views of how women may enter the political sphere is necessary. Women’s ability to contribute to political discourse has been explained via two primary theories, essentialist and constructivist feminism.<sup>20</sup>

The essentialist argument hinges on the biological ability of women to reproduce, arguing that this creates an inherently peaceful nature in all women. The nature of the essentialist view of woman is one of a conflict-adverse, demure, secondary character, wishing to placate rather than antagonize, nurture rather than confront. Since differences between men and women are believed to be concrete and unalterable, it follows that it is believed that they view the world in irreconcilably different ways. Carol Gilligan’s

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<sup>18</sup> Krebs, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Though rare, there have been isolated incidences of women assuming national leadership roles. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister Golda Meir, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Vice Presidential Candidate Geraldine Ferraro are examples of women who rose to political prominence and have been frequently accused of “being masculine” in order to achieve their positions.

<sup>20</sup> Melander, Erik. "Gender Equality and Intrastate Armed Conflict." *International Studies* 49 (2005): 695-714.

assertion that women prefer “harmonious human relationships” over “personal achievements and conquests” due to a desire to create an environment beneficial to their natural life-giving ability,<sup>21</sup> characterizes the essentialist school. Essentialism assumes a universal role for women worldwide, and therefore restricts women’s personal autonomy. The tying of women’s civic role to biology does not allow for unique circumstances or individual consciousness to impact the way in which women interact or inject themselves in society.

Women wishing to use essentialism to positively frame their place in society do so by emphasizing the natural tendencies to peace their life-giving nature guarantees. In the public arena, this translates to taking on roles as promoters of norms, laws and contracts that curb reactionary and aggressive men,<sup>22</sup> or by toting the positive peaceful benefits of “Maternal Thinking”<sup>23</sup> as a guide for society. If the essentialist woman attempts to carve out a place in politics and society, she does so only as a foil to the aggressive nature of man. Subscription to this view of gender roles and relations may allow women a place in public life, in societies where peace and stability are desired, however it will always be in a supporting role. The essentialist school thus leaves little room for women to create an opening to use rhetorical coercion when trying to demand rights in situations where the assertive male is still regarded as the ideal standard.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.

<sup>22</sup> Fukuyama, Francis. "Women and the Evolution of World Politics." *Foreign Affairs* 77, no. 5 (1998): 24-40.

<sup>23</sup> Ruddick, Sara. *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995.

<sup>24</sup> Bohan, Janis S. "Regarding Gender: Essentialism, Constructivism and Feminist Psychology." *Psychology Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (March 1993): 5-21.

Successful cases of rhetorical coercion, where women have participated in revolutionary movements and framed themselves as vital national actors, show that the essentialist paradigm does not hold. Women's ability to not only expand their worldview from a solely domestic focus, but to break from the "women-as-peacemakers" stereotype and integrate as equal citizens is a direct challenge to the belief that women's role is predetermined by her biology.

In contrast to essentialists, gender constructivists assert that the idea of "feminine" is not based on fundamental biological differences between men and women, but created via socially constructed gender roles. Central to this view is a rejection of the belief that women essentially share a universal nature. Rather, gender roles – both male and female – are constructed based on a society's communal and sociological ideals. Though externally created and imposed, constructed gender roles are still very powerful and present in both the public and private realms of society. The values surrounding constructed gender roles are instilled at an early age whereby boys are taught to be aggressive and assertive while girls are taught to be a passive audience, encouraging male feats of strength while not daring to challenge the status quo.<sup>25</sup> Women's characterization as demure, peaceful creatures is thus not a result of any essential or engrained part of their biological nature, but a constructed juxtaposition to the "hyper masculine" ideal.<sup>26</sup> In most societies, patriarchal gender role ideals have been entrenched for generations. However, they are not impregnable. Rejecting the notion that that the

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<sup>25</sup> Melander, 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Connell, R.W. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987.

masculine must necessarily be a “just warrior” and the feminine a “beautiful soul,”<sup>27</sup> gender constructions are believed to be not inevitable deterministic paths, but reversible artificial constraints on individual agency.<sup>28</sup>

These constructed views of gender roles and relations provide an opening for the successful use of rhetorical coercion. By redefining their role in society, and their relationship with other citizens, women are able to legitimately change their expected place in the social and political arena. In her exploration of the construction of gender roles, Judith Butler highlights the necessity of beginning a “dialogue on power”<sup>29</sup> as a first step towards reconstructing gender identities. Butler argues that whether civil or political, all societal relationships are based on power. Traditional constructed gender roles have been designed to perpetuate a male-dominated balance of power within society. Shifting the power dynamic therefore allows for a shift in gender roles.

The work done by Tiffany Barnes and Stephanie Burchard on African electoral politics reinforces the use of power dialogues as a first step towards redefining gender roles and opening the discourse of civic inclusion. Their findings, that the way in which female political candidates were described directly impacted the sense of civic and political belonging of women outside the political sphere,<sup>30</sup> points to the capability of rhetoric to shape the power dynamics that dictating gender roles. In regions where

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<sup>27</sup> Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Women and War*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

<sup>28</sup> Tickner, 1992

<sup>29</sup> Butler, Judith. *Gender Troubles: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1990.

<sup>30</sup> Barnes, Tiffany D., and Stephanie M. Burchard. "Engendering Politics: The Impact of Descriptive Representation on Women's Political Engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Comparative Political Studies* 46, no. 7 (2012): 767-790.

women were referred to as political actors and legitimate national leaders, women were more likely to engage in civic activities traditionally believed to be outside of the women's private domestic sphere. Where women were characterized as solely in politics to deal with "women's issues," women much less frequently ventured from their traditional roles in local civic society. The authors findings on what they call "descriptive representation" highlights the importance of women framing their national contributions in such a way that focuses on tangible impact to their polis as a whole, rather than existential ideas as to women's peaceful nature, if they are to contribute to greater societal change. Women who initially choose to break from their constructed expectations may be outliers, however their ability to frame their action has the potential to create a new paradigm.

### **Laying the Groundwork for Rhetorical Coercion by Signaling with Blood Sacrifice**

Given a republican discourse, combat service, framed by the power of braving bullets for the sake of one's country,<sup>31</sup> is often a successful means of achieving the necessary signal strength for a successful rhetorical coercion strategy. Yet formal military service has largely been closed to women, creating a hurdle in utilizing the signal strength of military service as a basis for rhetorical coercion. Women's participation in revolutionary movements, however, has been steadily increasing,<sup>32</sup> and women are becoming more visible both as participants on revolutionary battlefields, and leaders in violent anti-government movements. Revolutionary participation allows for women to

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<sup>31</sup> Krebs, 2006

<sup>32</sup> Diaz and Tordjman, 2012



both send a strong signal of their dedication to nationalism, and validate themselves for positions in society based on merit of action rather than constructed expectations,<sup>33</sup> opening the door for a reframing of gender roles. This participation thus fulfills many of the civic duty roles of traditional military service in a society based in a republican discourse.

Despite this uptick in women's involvement in revolutionary movements, conceptualizing women's participation in violent movements still presents many challenges. A shortage of empirical studies done on women's participation in violent movements has created a significant gap in literature. Though this is slowly starting to change, overwhelmingly, the historical study of women's participation in anti-government or revolutionary violent movements has been fueled by passion and romanticized ideals, based on a distortion of many of the essentialist assertions on the principles of female biology. While women can be easily conceptualized as supporting revolutionary causes as caretakers, cooks, or even peaceful protesters, making sense of women's autonomous agency to engage in deliberate politically motivated violence has provided an epistemological challenge. Robin Morgan highlights this view, by characterizing women involved in any organization that uses political violence as "rare, almost always 'tokens'... and invariably involved because of their love of a particular man, a personal demon lover who draws them in."<sup>34</sup> To engage in organized, deliberate violence as a means of achieving a political goal, women are believed to have to venture

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<sup>33</sup> Tetreault, Mary Ann. *Women and Revolution*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994.

<sup>34</sup> Morgan, Robin. *The Demon Lover: The Roots of Terrorism*. London: Plakus Press, 1998.

so far from either their essential or constructed nature that there is no way it could be done under their own agency.

Examining the historical journalistic reporting and scholarly work on women's involvement in violent anti-government groups such as the IRA, ETA, Shining Path and FARC, a picture of hyper-sexualized, morally unbalanced deviants meant to disapprovingly characterize women who are acting in non-traditional ways is presented.<sup>35</sup> Reports on women detained from such groups highlighted and focused on deranged personalities, deep-seeded sociopathic behavior and sexual perversion<sup>36</sup> rather than their political ideology or dedication to the overall goals of the movement. This characterization of women as subordinate, deviant pawns in violent anti-government movements has undermined the legitimacy of their participation. The lack of validity for women's role as autonomous actors engaging in violent anti-government activities has reinforced the narrative that women are passive, subordinate and of less powerful stature than men in society. Though data from international criminal and political organizations points to the reality that women have been active in combat leadership in anti-government movements since the 1950s, with a vast increase since the 1980s,<sup>37</sup> a desire to undermine women's apolitical role in society and perpetuate the gender-biased status quo has resulted in diminished reporting on and study of the extent of their involvement.

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<sup>35</sup> Sjoberg, Laura, and Caron E Gentry. *Women, Gender and Terroris*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011; Goldstein, Joshua S. *War and Gender*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

<sup>36</sup> Haen Marshal, Ineke, Vince Webb, and Dennis Hoffman. "A Review of the Explicit and Implicit Propositions about Women as Terrorists." *Resources for Feminist Research* 14, no. 4 (1986): 20-22.

<sup>37</sup> Gonzalez-Perez, Margaret. *Women and Terrorism: Female Activity in Domestic and International Terror Groups*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2008.

Despite these hurdles, there has been a push in recent years to better understand the motivations behind, and full extent of, the contribution of women to violent anti-government or revolutionary movements. These efforts have taken two primary paths. First, there has been a noticeable rise in heuristic case study work on specific revolutionary or anti-government groups. These have shown that women act not as deranged psychopaths or passive puppets to a stronger male, but as rational actors, choosing to participate in movements out of their own volition and belief in the cause.<sup>38</sup> In these studies, constructed pre-conceived notions as to how women *should* behave are removed, allowing the actual impact of their participation to be evaluated. Miranda Allison, in examining the motivations behind women joining the conflicts in Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland, negated the assumption that women are naturally more peaceful than men or that they join revolutions out of desperation by empirically showing that they are just as (if not more) violent than their male counterparts when acting out of a conscious decision to enact revolutionary change or defend their home.<sup>39</sup> Heuristic case studies such as these provide additional evidence that the essentialist view on women's political and civic involvement is not valid, and heightens the findings on the rhetorical base for constructed gender roles.

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<sup>38</sup> See, for example: Hamilton, Carrie. "The Gender Politics of Political Violence: Women Armed Activists in ETA." *Feminist Review*, no. 86 (2007): 132-148; Sunindyo, Saraswati. "When the Earth is Female and the Nation is Mother: Gender, the Armed Forces and Nationalism in Indonesia." *Feminist Review*, no. 58 (1998): 1-21; Rosman-Stollman, Elisheva. "Women of Valor: The Garin Program and the Israel Defense Forces." *Israel Studies* 14, no. 2 (2009): 158-177; Tetreault, Mary Ann. *Women and Revolution*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994; Mason, Christine. "Violence and Nonviolent Resistance in East Timor." *Journal of Peace Research* 42, no. 6 (November 2005): 737-749.; Noonan, Rita K. "Women Against the State: Political Opportunities and Collective Action Frames in Chile's Transition to Democracy." *Sociological Forum* 10, no. 1 (March 1995): 81-111.

<sup>39</sup> Allison, 2004.

Second, a body of literature linking improvements in women's economic status to a rise in their political consciousness and activism has emerged. Linda Reif exemplifies this in her exploration of how working class women contributed to guerilla movements in Latin America.<sup>40</sup> She shows how socialization and politicization in the workforce raised social consciousness and provided a means by which women are able to overcome some of the constructed barriers to the acceptance of their participation in anti-government movements. Participation and leadership in worker's strikes and membership in labor unions were the initial steps to women's inclusion in larger political movements. This view of the evolution of women's participation in violent movements is linear and predicated on the grievance model of rebellion. As women become economically socialized outside the domestic sphere, they become increasingly aware of class-based inequalities. Their workforce socialization sets conditions for the acceptance of their broader political participation. Workplace socialization accelerates the breakdown of the homefront/warfront boundary that naturally occurs during revolutions, allowing women to act outside traditional gender roles.<sup>41</sup>

The dynamic nature of revolutionary movements provides a unique opportunity for women to engage in coercive rhetoric. Theoretical work on social institutions and revolutionary change highlights the way in which revolutionary participation provides a necessarily strong signal to act as a base for coercive rhetoric. James March and Johan Olsen, in evaluating the longevity of informal institutions, assert that highly socialized orders and preferences are likely only to "change by a revolutionary intervention

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<sup>40</sup> Reif, 1986.

<sup>41</sup> Alison, 2004.

exogenous to ordinary political activities.”<sup>42</sup> When coupled with Theda Skocpol’s “multiple causation” theories of revolution,<sup>43</sup> the changing of women’s status in society can be accelerated through revolutionary participation. The strong appeal to a new nationalism necessary for mass revolutionary mobilization<sup>44</sup> provides an opening for women to insert themselves as necessary for this new identity, and therefore as equal citizens as a result of their participation. Strong national identities bind revolutionary actors together and provide a bridge between individual participants.<sup>45</sup> The shared experiences of participation are the baseline for shaping these identities as well as the socialization and inter-group contact to create strong horizontal ties throughout the polis.

The rhetorical power of a new national identity via revolutionary change lies in revolutionary actors’ ability to reshape informal institutions to fit their demands. Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky have found that “if a sufficiently large enough number of actors become convinced that a new and better alternative exists, and if a mechanism exists through which to coordinate the actors’ expectations, a shift from one set of norms to another may occur quite rapidly.”<sup>46</sup> The transformations to family, political, and economic life that occur during maximalist revolutions provide such a

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<sup>42</sup> March, James G., and Johan P Olsen. "The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life." *The American Political Science Review*, no. 78 (1984): 734-779.

<sup>43</sup> Skocpol, Theda. *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

<sup>44</sup> Skocpol, 1994.

<sup>45</sup> Greenfield and Eastwood, 2009.

<sup>46</sup> Helmke, Gretchen, and Steven Levitsky. "Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda." *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no. 4 (2004): 725-740.

mechanism. These transformations further afford women the opportunity to be judged on their contributions and performance rather than on the stereotypes of the status quo.

Krebs has found that the associations made during time of war and conflict not only contribute to society's horizontal cohesion and the creation of a new national dialogue and identity, but also "shapes the communal orientations of future political leaders."<sup>47</sup> Successful contributions to revolutions mirror this benefit of military service. Leaders of anti-government movements are frequently instrumental in leading negotiated settlements and transitioning anti-government movements to political parties. The new political elite, committed to revolutionary ideology and invested as participants in the struggle, are most likely to continue to perpetuate the social, economic, and political changes brought about during the revolution.

Popular movements are also likely to promote a republican discourse due to the focus on shaping new a new national identity and rewarding civic duty. The movements being addressed here all sought to overthrow or expel authoritarian regime. The fact that such regimes "trivialized citizenship and repressed political identities ... destroying self-organized and autonomously defined political spaces,"<sup>48</sup> served to encourage the adoption of a republican discourse. Republican ideals of civic duty and participation provide a stark contrast to authoritarian rule, and strengthen the popular nature of the anti-government movement.

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<sup>47</sup> Krebs, 2006.

<sup>48</sup> O'Donnell, Guillermo, and Philippe C. Schmitter. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*. Baltimore, MD: John's Hopkin's University Press , 1986.

Revolutions provide an opportunity to reconstruct socially engrained gender roles. When women shape their service in such a way as to highlight their contributions as nationally focused *citizens* rather than narrowly concerned with the plight of women, they simultaneously work to reconstruct both national identity and gender roles.

### **Note On Method and Selection of Cases**

To further explain and analyze the phenomena surrounding women's use of coercive rhetoric in the post-revolutionary environment I have drawn on three case studies. Two of these, El Salvador and Eritrea, examine the successful use of rhetorical coercion in expanding post-conflict political empowerment, while Guatemala presents a failed case. In studying broad phenomena like revolution, Charles Tilly warns against an oversimplification of models and encourages social scientists to "break down big events into causally connected sequences of events, and examine every link in the chain."<sup>49</sup> The three cases used here were chosen for this reason, as they each allow for all of the primary inputs to rhetorical coercion to be examined, and the strength of each to be tested. The multiplicity of layers contained within the coercive rhetoric model lends itself to case study research in order to ensure that the context of the model is appropriately considered, and that the nuance of the strength of input to each layer properly considered. The heuristic value of the cases selected helps to further the model on the whole,<sup>50</sup> while simultaneously raising important questions for further research.

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<sup>49</sup> Tilly, Charles. "To Explain the Political Process." *American Journal of Sociology* 100, no. 6 (1995): 1594-1610.

<sup>50</sup> McKeown, Timothy J. "Case Studies and the Statistical Worldview." *International Organization* 53, no. 1 (1999): 161-190.

Structuring a case study analysis around mechanisms and inputs of one model also highlight the interconnectedness of several theoretical models of understanding. While I am primarily focusing on rhetorical coercion as a means to explain the link between revolutionary participation and political empowerment, theories of political constructivism, feminist constructivism, national identity politics and social revolutions also play important roles in crafting a complete understanding of the rhetorical coercion phenomena. A pure statistical quantitative analysis of women's use of rhetorical coercion would not successfully answer the questions involved in exploring these theoretical intersections.

The cases chosen do not necessarily represent the most similar in all aspects, however share the features necessary for conducting a cross-case study analysis. El Salvador and Guatemala are the most naturally paired. Their similar history and geography, as well as religious and demographic commonalities provide a common set of preconditions. While legally enfranchised, women faced social, religious and cultural barriers to entry in the political arena that kept them *de facto* second-class citizens to men. They also faced discrimination and devalued sociopolitical status due to a lack of education and property rights. Voting restrictions, economic constraints and conservative family law all hindered women's ability to be fully enfranchised members of society. The preconditions and restrictions on women in Eritrea were much more severe than either El Salvador or Guatemala, and women's success in gaining political empowerment highlights the power of rhetorical coercion in even the most extreme circumstances.

During their individual revolutions, the cases examined experienced similar levels of combat participation by women. In all cases women were officially coopted into the



revolutionary movement and recognized by leadership. Women held varying positions – ranging from combatant to cook – and were active in both the militant and political wings of movements. Individual testimonials from former combatants show autonomous agency in joining the movements, and highlight political ideology and defense of their homeland as the primary reasons for participation in revolutionary movements.

Ideologically, all the cases chosen adhere to some form of Marxist ideology. The Marxist teaching that all revolutions are part of larger social change<sup>51</sup> creates an environment of dramatic social upheaval, allowing for previously disenfranchised groups to make great gains in the civic arena. The Marxist underpinnings of social and political equality and collective action-based domestic social structures provide an organic opportunity for women to engage in activities outside of their traditional gender roles. Holding the ideological slant of the revolutionary movement constant ensures that women's improvement with regards to political and civic empowerment is not due to one movement being more inclusive than the others. It also allows for comparisons between women and other previously disenfranchised minorities to help isolate the impact of women's use of rhetorical coercion.

The cases presented all ended in negotiated settlements that included women's participation that spanned all stages of the negotiation process. The ability to examine how women used both revolutionary and negotiation participation in such a way that it creates a rhetorical advantage is important for a more complete understanding of the nuances of rhetorical coercion. It is worth noting that the cases chosen all resulted in a negotiated settlement prior to the passage of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR)

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<sup>51</sup> Skocpol, 1994.

1325 in October 2000 (El Salvador – 1979-1992, Guatemala – 1960-1996, Eritrea – 1961-1991/2). UNSCR calls for the equal participation and full involvement by women in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, including peace negotiations, post-conflict settlements and special post-conflict governing bodies.<sup>52</sup> While UNSCR 1325 has done much to promote the inclusion of women in conflict negotiations, and recognizes the importance of their contributions, it also represents an external variable inserted into conflict negotiations. Examining cases of women's involvement prior to UNSCR 1325's passage, therefore, allows for an examination of the organic nature of rhetorical coercion. Though all three cases included external facilitation during negotiations, it was not directed at women, nor did it impact what was discussed during negotiations.

All three cases include a demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) process for former combatants that impacted women's ability to use rhetorical coercion. The inclusive nature of the programs in El Salvador and Eritrea strengthened women's rhetorical strategic advantage, as the validation received during the DDR process created an additional cost on the new government if they were to deny women's political empowerment. Through their lessons learned, the UN has found that inclusive and extensive DDR programs are a key component of a stable and robust post-conflict government.<sup>53</sup> These programs help to ensure that there is not a return to discriminatory status-quo practices in the post-conflict societies, and give women another tool to use in

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<sup>52</sup> Text of UNSCR Available at the UN's Website at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>

<sup>53</sup> Douglas, Sarah, Felicity Hill, Vanessa Farr, and Wenny Kasuma. *Getting it Right, Doing it Right: Gender and Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration*. Report, New York: UNIFEM, 2004.

crafting their rhetorical strategy. In Guatemala, conversely, the exclusionary and segregated nature of the DDR problem further disadvantaged women in their ability to successfully use rhetorical coercion.

The variance in outcomes of women's attempt to gain increased post-conflict political empowerment allows for an examination of the strength of rhetorical coercion's layers and its linking mechanisms between stages in a conflict. The relationship between model and case study also proves to be two-way. The purpose of these case studies is not simply to rehash the model with the appropriate names and events inserted to meet its needs and show success. Rather, in applying case studies to the model, not only is the explanatory power of the model explored, but new questions surrounding the subject and means of improving it are raised.

## CHAPTER TWO: EL SALVADOR – THE INCLUSIVE RHETORIC OF LIBERATION

### Conflict Background

In 1997, president of the Salvadorian Legislative Assembly Gloria Salguero Cross, a prominent member of the right-leaning ARENA party, was surrounded by a group of female legislatures who had been former militants with the leftist Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) in a unified bid to introduce new legislation.<sup>54</sup> This scene, the leadership and partnership built on a common understanding of the necessity of compromise to further the political needs of the nation between women on the left and right of the political spectrum, is largely a result of the way in which women in the FMLN successfully translated their revolutionary participation into an influential role in the post-revolutionary government.

A small country in Central America, the international attention El Salvador gained during its dozen years of bloody civil war is a direct reflection of Cold War geopolitics. Throughout the 1970s, an economic crisis fueled by the international drop in oil prices led to mass amounts of civil unrest. Protests over unemployment, land ownership rights

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<sup>54</sup> Ready, Kelley. "A Feminist Reconstruction of Parenthood within Neoliberal Constraints." In *Radical Women in Latin America*, by Victoria Gonzalez and Karen Kampwirth, 165-188. College Station, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001.

and income inequality with regards to both agriculture and oil profits led to the formation and growth of several left-wing “peasant” movements, and frequent clashes between them and the landed elite-supported Armed Forces of El Salvador (FAES). Women were hit particularly hard in this crisis. Already at a disadvantage due to indigenous patriarchal norms that were reinforced by Spanish colonizers, women were further disenfranchised as the military escalated its response to popular unrest. Male activists frequently fled El Salvador for fear of their lives, joined the newly forming armed opposition movements or fell victim to the harsh punishments of the FAES. As a result of this male flight, by the mid-1970s, over 40% of households were headed by a single woman.<sup>55</sup> El Salvador’s traditional patriarchal society hindered women’s ability to own land or seek employment outside the home, resulting in over 90% of women-head households existing below the poverty line.<sup>56</sup> These same patriarchal traditions kept women from participating in politics or civic life, and largely denied women education beyond the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Patriarchal traditions restricted women’s ability to participate in either local or national politics without their husband present, effectively barring them from participation. Though close to 60% of girls had basic literacy skills when they left primary school, the lack of opportunity to use them led to their atrophy, and women over 18 had less than 25% literacy rate. This statistic was exacerbated in rural areas where less than 10% of adult women were functionally literate. While women in urban centers of El Salvador were active in the blue-collar workforce, they were subject to great

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<sup>55</sup> Hipsher, Patricia. “Right- and Left-Wing Women in Post-Revolutionary El Salvador.” In *Radical Women in Latin America*, by Victoria Gonzalez and Karen Kampwirth, 133-164. College Station, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001.

<sup>56</sup> Carter, Brenda, Kevin Insko, David Loeb, and Marline Tobias. *A Dream Compels Us: Voices of Salvadorian Women*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1989.

disparity in pay, discriminated against due to child-care obligations, and not allowed autonomy over their finances.<sup>57</sup> The close ties between landowners and the FAES reinforced the plight of women-headed households, as it was ensured that any ability to earn an income was denied. The coupling of lack of education with no opportunity for civic discourse created a situation of perpetual poverty that reinforced the gender-based inequality.

The decade of the 1970s ended with a military coup, an event celebrated throughout the West. Millions of dollars in aid for the Salvadorian army poured in from the United States in a bid to “prevent another Nicaragua,”<sup>58</sup> a reference to the leftist Sandinistas that threatened to provide a communist foothold in Central America. The aid, however, concentrated political power in the hands of the FAES. Rather than promoting democratic rule of law and an open economy, the FAES-led government used the aid to bolster their ability to conduct mass arrests to quell political dissention and increase the police force to violently repress the voicing of political grievances.

In response, opposition violence escalated in both the cities (where the majority of the political prisoners were held) and in the rural areas, and opposition groups organized and began a concerted effort to form a solidified anti-government movement. As a central pillar in Salvadorian life, the Catholic Church intervened in an attempt to mediate the burgeoning violent struggle. Archbishop Oscar Romero wrote letters to President Jimmy Carter, asking for a suspension of aid to the Salvadorian army due to their grave

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<sup>57</sup> Reif, 1986.

<sup>58</sup> Conrad, Thomas, and Cynthia Arson. "Aid for El Salvador is Called Nonlethal." *The New York Times*, June 15, 1980: E21.

human rights violations and oppressive rule. Not only were these pleas denied, but the Archbishop was assassinated in the Spring of 1980. Supporters of the Archbishop claimed that his assassination was a result of his vocal anti-government stance, and that the US was responsible for it. Archbishop Romero's death served as a catalyst for the diffuse anti-government leftist movements to unify and form the FMLN, and for Romero's teachings of liberation theology to become central to their movement.

### **Revolution and Women's Participation in the FMLN – A civic-minded theology for the masses**

The assassination of Archbishop Romero was followed with the public rape and beating of four nuns by members of the FAES. This systematic state-sanctioned violence against the Church, the symbol of peace and unity in the country, served as a catalyst for the base of the population to support the FMLN in coordinating and developing into a full-scale guerilla movement with the professed aim of overthrowing the Salvadorian military regime. As a counter to the FAES-led government, supported by the landed elite, the FMLN was a peasant movement, and as such had Marxist leanings of egalitarianism. The harsh treatment of the working class in urban centers, and continued imprisonment of political dissidents led to a spread of the movement to the urban working class, political leftists and poor.

The egalitarianism framework of the FMLN was not solely due to secular Marxist ideology, as it was also largely influenced by and framed through the Church's teaching on liberation theology. As a theological teaching, liberation theology focuses both on the

teachings that God holds the poor and earthly oppressed in his favor,<sup>59</sup> and Jesus' examples of social justice and popular equality.<sup>60</sup> The vast majority of Salvadorian churches were involved with the liberation theology movement, and provided an essential mouthpiece for the poor and politically disenfranchised to counter the pro-government media outlets. Priests directly challenged the government from their pulpit, calling on the military to use their power to uplift, rather than oppress the poor, and for the government to be open to receiving input from the citizenry.<sup>61</sup> Church publications additionally provided room for popular leaders to spread their anti-government message and coordinate meetings. The Church's presence throughout El Salvador served as a unifying factor between the urban and rural poor, strengthening the egalitarian unity of the FMLN.

Liberation theology enhanced the egalitarian nature of women's participation in the revolutionary movement. While women were drawn to the FMLN (and its numerous affiliate groups) primarily due to issues of land rights, economic autonomy and class struggle,<sup>62</sup> the Church's focus on social service provision and national ecumenical unity gave women the practical ability to participate fully in the movement. In conjunction with the Women's Association of El Salvador (AMES), Churches provided for collective childcare and free primary and secondary education, freeing women to fully participate in revolutionary activities. The collective emphasis on child rearing and schooling also served to change the national rhetoric around the nature of the family. Rather than being

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<sup>59</sup> Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation*. London: SCM Press, 1974.

<sup>60</sup> Berryman, Phillip. *Liberation Theology: Essential Facts About the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond*. Evansville, IN: Meyer Stone Books, 1987.

<sup>61</sup> Berryman, 1987.

<sup>62</sup> Reif, 1986.



the domain of private domiciles, child rearing became viewed as a duty of the revolution, and a means of perpetuating the anti-military government movement. Childcare was longer merely seen as the feminine domestic task of “taking care of children,” but lauded as necessary for “shaping the next generation of revolutionaries.”<sup>63</sup>

Liberation theology provided the basis of the FMLN’s dedication to promoting “democracy, equality, social justice, an end to the dictatorship and new opportunities in life.”<sup>64</sup> Across the demographic span of El Salvador women took active roles in all facets of the FMLN. The focus on countering both the politics and society the military government created led to a “counter culture that stimulated a new role for women in El Salvador.”<sup>65</sup> Within the FMLN, women and men participated equally in all activities, from combat to political leadership. By the mid-1980s, 40% of the FMLN members were women, including at least 30% of combatants, fully committed to the social and political change the FMLN professed. Salvadorian women distinguished themselves in battle, with an equal proportion of women and men reaching leadership ranks. The successes of the Silvia Battalion and the Anti-Yankee Battalion, both composed of over 75% female fighters, were pivotal in securing a foothold for the FMLN against military forces.<sup>66</sup> Their exploits become central to the FMLN’s anti-government rhetoric. The FMLN did not aim to create a new Salvadorian identity, but rather through mobilization and

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<sup>63</sup> Carter, Insko, Loeb, and Tobias, 1989.

<sup>64</sup> Kampwirth, Karen. *Feminism and the Legacy of Revolution: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2004.

<sup>65</sup> Alvarez, Alberto Martin. "From Revolutionar War to Democratic Revolution: The Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador." Occasional Paper, Berghof Conflict Research Center, Berlin, 2010.

<sup>66</sup> Gonzalez-Perez, 2008.

unification of the base of the population – both urban and rural – highlight and resurrect the true Salvadorian identity. The military government, due to the large amount of aid it received from the U.S., was painted as being anti-Salvadorian, serving the wishes of the West rather than its citizens. The FMLN upheld policies that countered the military government as truly Salvadorian.

While slight ideological deviations would remain between the groups that made up the FMLN, they unified around the central tenants that populism, social liberation and communal unity were the necessary foundation to counter the military government's Western-backed, authoritarian style of rule.<sup>67</sup> The combination of the door opened by liberation theology and the egalitarian nature of the FMLN's rhetorical and ideological base created the situation in which women were able to shed the vestiges of the both the traditional patriarchal culture and oppressive militaristic regime.

### **Women Mobilize and Create an Inclusive Rhetoric**

In addition to the equitable social benefits women gained through their participation in the FMLN, there were many practical benefits to service. Women fighters received extensive tactical leadership training, as well as formal education. Especially for women from rural areas who had been isolated in the home most of their life, the contact with members from urban areas provided them with exposure to civic and political discourse that opened doors to new professional and civic leadership

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<sup>67</sup> Allison, Michael E., and Alberto Martin Alvarez. "Unity and Disunity in the FMLN." *Latin American Politics and Security* 54, no. 4 (2012): 80-119.

possibilities.<sup>68</sup> The egalitarian inclusion, education, and politicization of women by the FMLN were essential for the FMLN's survival as a truly popular movement. The women of the FMLN broke gender stereotypes, and faced great danger in the process. Their ability to embrace these challenges and hardships, and continue to succeed, served as a model for other disenfranchised communities, growing the FMLN's reach. Women's unique ability to appeal to a demographically diverse cross section of the underrepresented and disenfranchised population created what Julia Shayne refers to as "gendered revolutionary bridges."<sup>69</sup> Women in El Salvador, she argues, had a profound impact on other groups due largely to the fact that they rose from ignored secondary citizen to integral parts of the revolutionary leadership seemingly overnight. This meteoric shift in social role spoke volumes to the power of the FMLN's ideology, and women became exalted as a symbol of the power of anti-government resistance. Women were able to act as the epicenter for socialization between previously disenfranchised groups, heightening the exchange of revolutionary dialogue and solidifying what it means to be Salvadorian.

Gendered revolutionary bridges also eased the transition into the FMLN for those who joined because they felt they had "no other choice."<sup>70</sup> The brutal tactics of the Salvadorian government, indiscriminate violence against entire villages, arbitrary

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<sup>68</sup> Conaway, Camille Pampell, and Salome Martinez. *Adding Value: Women's Contribution to Reintegration and Reconstruction in El Salvador*. Series Paper, Washington, DC: Women Waging Peace, 2004.

<sup>69</sup> Shayne, Julia Denise. "Gendered Revolutionary Bridges: Women in the Salvadorian Resistance Movement (1979-1992)." *Latin American Perspectives* 26, no. 3 (May 1999): 85-102.

<sup>70</sup> Viterna, Jocelyn. "Pulled, Pushed and Persuaded: Explaining Women's Mobilization into the Salvadorian Guerrilla Army." *American Journal of Sociology* 112, no. 1 (July 2006): 1-45.

imprisonment, and public rapes and beatings, left many people believing that joining the FMLN was the only way to ensure the safety of themselves and their families. With women as an example of an unlikely group having success in the FMLN, these reluctant guerrillas felt much more comfortable that the movement would not only offer them physical protection, but promote a positive political environment as well. Women's groups such as the Committee of the Mothers Monsignor Romero (CO-MADRES), served as de facto ambassadors for the FMLN. As victims, or the family members of victims, of the harsh tactics of the Salvadorian regime themselves, they were able to speak to the ability of the FMLN to not only protect them, but to promote ideals that would create a society in which the government would truly exist to serve, not brutalize, the population.

The CO-MADRES serve as an example of how women's groups formed during the civil war served as nationalistic, not purely feminist, actors. Though comprised entirely of women, the CO-MADRES always framed their actions as being for the greatest benefit of the Salvadorian people. They did not promote women's issues, but issues of national safety and security, and focused their attentions on highlighting the injustices of the military regime. Their focus on directly confronting and targeting the FAES and military regime legitimized them as a player on the national revolutionary level. The CO-MADRES were not "just a group of mothers, [but] a threat to the regime's hold on power."<sup>71</sup> Their ability, as women, to relate to a broad cross-section of the population, coupled with the widespread attention their actions received, served to increase the base of support for the FMLN. Their ability, as women, to reach out to

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<sup>71</sup> Shayne, 1999.

disenfranchised population, coupled with their choice to not focus on purely women's issues but to attend to the needs of Salvadorians as a whole, contributed to the strategy of women to integrate into the national identity dialogue.

Women's appeal to a mass population base, and their ability to gain the socialization and contact benefits from revolutionary participation was not limited to the battlefield or organized proactive campaigns. No discussion on women's involvement in the civil war is complete without noting the impact women's imprisonment and forced exile due to revolutionary participation had on the way they saw their national service and identity. The FAES-led government imprisoned thousands of women on various charges tied to their revolutionary activity. Despite, or perhaps because of, the repressive mechanism of the state penal system, political prison became

the critical space within which... alternative social and political practices of the counterhegemonic resistance movement were schooled. Prison education, unlike much of the education professed in the Western-backed institutions [throughout] El Salvador, functioned to undermine the very walls and premises that contain it.<sup>72</sup>

Prison time served to strengthen both the political acuteness of FMLN members and their organizational ties with one another. Given the vast number of political prisoners held by the Salvadorian military, there were not adequate facilities for single-sex prisons. The close quarters shared by male and female political prisoners, and women's leadership in groups such as the *Comite de Presos Politicos de El Salvador* (Committee for Political Prisoners in El Salvador - COPPES) led to further exposure and contact between men and women that wouldn't have occurred in pre-revolutionary society. The shared experiences

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<sup>72</sup> Lorentzen, Lois Ann. "Waiting for Liberation: Prison Testimonials from El Salvador." In *Liberation Theologies, Postmodernity and the Americans*, by David B. Bastone. New York, NY: Psychology Press, 1997

of both combat and prison increased the gender barrier-breaking contact, solidifying women's increased political and civic status.

In their harsh treatment of women, the Salvadorian military unintentionally promoted their role as central national actors. The torture they faced at the hands of prison guards stripped them of their femininity, and justified their claims of dedication to the movement above themselves. Chronic prison overcrowding meant that the most prominent political prisoners were forced into exile. Many of these women fled to England or France, where they were exposed to political sentiment of gender equality being essential to the promotion of national security and state stability.<sup>73</sup> In the early 1990s, as peace was being negotiated between the FMLN and the Salvadorian government, many of these women returned from overseas and began to promote nationalism as contingent on women's involvement in peace and stability.<sup>74</sup>

### **Solidifying Rhetorical Success with Post-Revolutionary National Involvement**

Women's prevalence in all parts of the FMLN led to a successful redefinition of both women's role in society and the conception of the Salvadorian political elite. Though many women may have joined the FMLN out of necessity, the organizational and leadership skills they gained, especially while fighting, allowed them to transcend cultural and political barriers to become a fully integrated part of the FMLN's "elite" by

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<sup>73</sup> See Hudson, Valerie M, Bonnie Ballif-Spanvill, Mary Caprioli, and Chad F Emmett. *Sex and World Peace*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012 for an empirical discussion of this connection.

<sup>74</sup> Hipsher, 2001

the time it was agreed upon that a negotiated settlement was the only way to end the conflict.<sup>75</sup>

Women's pervasive presence throughout the FMLN, the political and civic education they received as prisoners and exiles, and the gendered bridges women's groups established for the promotion of national ideology ensured that women were included in all of the negotiations leading up to and including the conflict-ending Chapultepec Agreement. At these negotiations, women were vocal about the fact that they were representatives for the fighting groups or agrarian communities, not members of a women's movement. Yet while they did not address women-specific issues, their leadership and presence at the negotiation table made a significant difference for women's lives in the post-conflict environment.<sup>76</sup>

The most immediate and tangible benefit women were able to provide other women came through the reintegration program. Six of the seven negotiators for the reintegration program were women, positions they received due to their leadership in the parties to the conflict. Having been typically active in social outreach groups, women FMLN leaders had a unique perspective on what must be included in a successful reintegration effort. Continuing in the spirit of CO-MADRE organization, reintegration benefits were negotiated not only for self-identified FMLN combatants, but for individuals and families who had joined in hopes of receiving protection and did not directly engage in combat activities. Due to these women-led efforts, over 800,000

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<sup>75</sup> Hipsher, 2001.

<sup>76</sup> Conaway and Martinez, 2004.

families were eligible for reintegration benefits.<sup>77</sup> The prominence of women in these negotiations, and the benefits they were able to secure, led to them being seen as capable national leaders throughout the country.

The reintegration process was also designed in such a way as to ensure the full demobilization of both the FMLN and FAES military fighters. Women's presence on the negotiating and planning team sent a signal to larger society that former-fighters were not deserving of any stigma for their actions during the civil war. In the first year post-settlement, over 30% of demobilized combatants were female, a number equivalent to their fighting strength during the war.<sup>78</sup> The United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL)<sup>79</sup> kept meticulous records in order to ensure that women were accurately and successfully accounted for during the demobilization and reintegration process. ONUSAL's reliance on the female-led reintegration negotiators and the insurance on women's inclusion in the DDR process served to further validate women's role as national actors.

The pervasiveness and validation of women's participation in the FMLN, the inclusive nature of liberation theology, and the FMLN's focus on rewarding participation and civic discourse created a means by which women were assured a continued prominent role in the post-conflict civil society. If women were forced to return to the pre-revolution patriarchal status quo, the new government would have had to abandon the

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<sup>77</sup> Segovia, Alexander. *Transitional Justice and DDR: The Case of El Salvador*. Report, New York: International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009.

<sup>78</sup> Segovia, 2009.

<sup>79</sup> Historical information on the UN Mission in El Salvador can be found at: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/onusal.htm>



principles on which its entire movement had been based, and deny a vital sector of the population the just civic rewards for their participation. Not willing to compromise their principles, the new FMLN-led government accepted women as essential national leaders. By their presence as national leaders, women were able to secure economic, land and family rights for women, framing them as integral to the interests of El Salvador.<sup>80</sup>

## **Outcome**

The combination of the support of Church, success in combat actions, political leadership, and contact with the population during the civil war, coupled with success during post-conflict negotiations, put women in a position to continue their role as prominent national actors. Figure 2 traces the Salvadorian women's successful use of rhetorical coercion during and in the immediate aftermath of the civil war.

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<sup>80</sup> Ready, 2001.

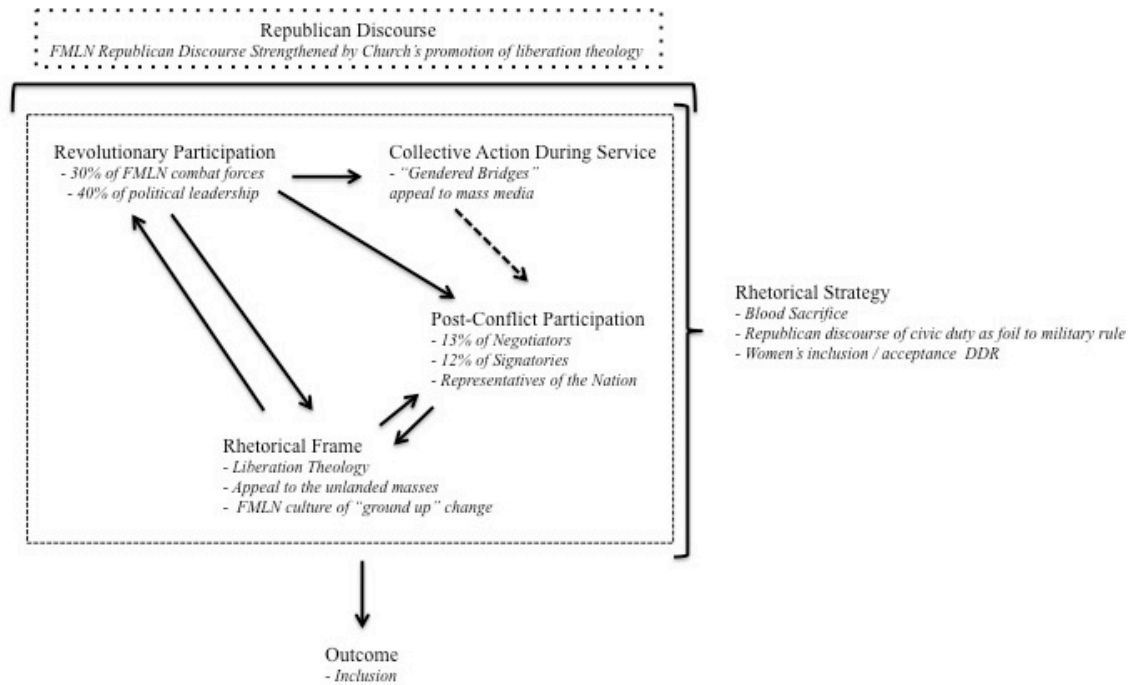


FIGURE 2 – Salvadorian Women's Use of Rhetorical Coercion

Both the teachings of Liberation Theology and the ideological basis of the FMLN promoted the benefits of popular participation for social change as necessary for both religious and civic duty.<sup>81</sup> Coupled with women's unique ability to form gendered bridges that integrated them fully into the national movement of the FMLN, they provided the backbone from Salvadorian women's successful rhetorical strategy. The FMLN's dedication to portraying itself as a stark contrast to the military regime by rewarding civic duty and participation and promoting popular rule helped to open the door to republican discourse that would lead women's continued political inclusion. If women were to be denied equal empowerment, or forced back into pre-revolutionary traditional gender roles, it would have necessitated a great departure from the professed commitments of a movement thousands of women had lost their life promoting.

<sup>81</sup> Berryman, 1987.

Since the Chapultepec Agreement, women's percentage of the elected representative body has been steadily increasing, with women winning over 26% of parliamentary seats in the 2012 elections,<sup>82</sup> without a national quota system.<sup>83</sup> Many of the women currently active in politics were active fighters or political activists during the civil war, and their organizational skills and continued capacity to form gendered bridges has served the rights of women well. Since 2006, El Salvador has ranked tied for first in women's health and survival in the Global Gender Gap Report,<sup>84</sup> a testament to the broad ranging improvements brought about by women's inclusion in the national political arena. Additionally, in 2010, the Special and Comprehensive Law for a Life Free from Violence for Women (or "Special Law"), Latin America's strongest law criminalizing violence against and exploitation of women was passed. The Special Law is unique not just in its comprehensive strength, but in the fact that it was championed not as women's rights agenda item, but an essential national security issue.<sup>85</sup> While gender-based and domestic violence continues to be a problem in Salvadorian society, it is openly addressed. Police reports, investigations and prosecutions have increased since the passage of the Special Law, highlighting that women have truly taken a place in national priority. The continued framing of women's issues as essential to the national interest

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<sup>82</sup> World Bank. *Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments*. February 13, 2014. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS> (accessed February 18, 2014).

<sup>83</sup> In 2013, resultant from the urging of Salvadorian women in parliament, party-list quotas were officially adopted, however they will not go into effect until the 2014 elections. The FMLN's political wing has always held a 30% self-imposed list quota, with women frequently making up 50% of the list.

<sup>84</sup> World Economic Forum. *The Global Gender Gap Report*. Annual Report, Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2013.

<sup>85</sup> Zulver, Julia. "El Salvador Elections: Putting Women's Rights on the Agenda." *Al Jazeera News*, January 14, 2014: 1.

nearly two decades after the end of the civil war shows the enduring success of rhetorical coercion when framed in the national interest.

## CHAPTER THREE: GUATEMALA – A FAILURE TO ENGAGE THE NATIONAL REPUBLICAN DISCOURSE

### Conflict Background

In the run-up to the final peace accords between the Guatemalan Government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit (URNG), ten diverse civil society networks, together comprising the Assembly of Civil Society (ASC), were created to ensure diverse input to the negotiation process. The purpose of the ASC was to give civilian society “official recognition as interlocutor to the negotiation process.”<sup>86</sup> In principle, encouraging civic discourse is a positive means of including the polis in determining their future system of government. The reality, however, was that the ASC stove piped civic interest groups, including women, and provided an excuse for the new government to limit citizenship recognition and political empowerment.

The Guatemalan Civil War spanned over three decades and dozens of incarnations of leftist guerrilla groups fighting the right-wing military government. Much in the same way as El Salvador, the small Central American country gained international attention as a Cold War proxy fighting ground. Beginning in 1954, a series of successive

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<sup>86</sup> Luciak, Ilja A. “Joining Forces for Democratic Governance.” In *Gendered Peace: Women's Struggles for Post-War Justice and Reconciliation*, by Donna Pankhurst. New York, NY: Routledge, 2007.

US-backed military governments engaged in increasingly brutal tactics against the civilian, largely indigenous, population to “cleanse” the country of any potential leftist sympathizers. The targeted indigenous populations were primarily concentrated in rural areas, and denied the ability to own land or make economic gains from their labor. Allied with the large landowners, the military government burned entire villages in scorched earth tactics, and “disappeared” thousands of heads of households. The indiscriminate nature of the government’s violence targeted all of the rural poor, and the government’s harsh tactics ultimately spread to the urban poor as well, as their increased protests and strikes became viewed as detrimental to the government’s hold on power.

Pre-revolutionary Guatemala was a traditional, highly patriarchal society, with Western patriarchal ideals reinforcing the traditions of the indigenous and rural populations. The majority of the economy was agrarian based, and men spent most of the year traveling wherever necessary to find work, often not returning to their family homes for several years at a time. This left women to run households, with over 60% of rural families being head by a single female. The stress placed on these female-run households was compounded by the fact that women were not allowed to own property, engage in autonomous economic activity, or participate fully in the civic/political discourse.<sup>87</sup> The favoritism towards landowners shown by the military government perpetuated the plight of rural disenfranchisement. Children rarely attended school, as their labor was required to meet the landowners’ production demands. With no legal means of improving their

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<sup>87</sup> Deere, Carmen Diana, and Magdalena Leon. *Empowering Women: Land and Property Rights in Latin America*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001.

own or their family's situation, women-headed households were trapped in an inescapable cycle of poverty.

In urban centers, women were permitted to engage in factory-labor, however not to maintain agency over their finances.<sup>88</sup> Women-headed households were also common among the urban poor, as men frequently departed to agrarian areas, for better-paying seasonal farm work. The plight suffered by urban women thus mirrored that of rural women, stuck in a seemingly endless and inescapable cycle of poverty and violent oppression.

The vulnerability of their situation made female-led households and rural communities easy targets for the government violent and repressive tactics. In the first four years of the civil war alone, over 12,000 civilians were killed, beginning of what was known as La Violencia.<sup>89</sup> La Violencia was characterized by the government's mass killings and forced disappearances as they attempted to instill a reign of terror to perpetuate their hold on power.

The one refuge for both urban and rural poor women was found in the Church. Bishops throughout the countryside and in poor urban centers became outspoken advocates for the poor, and defiantly confronted government death squads.<sup>90</sup> The teachings of liberation theology gave women, both rural and urban, strength and a means to uplift their place in society. Though the church was vocal in supporting women and

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<sup>88</sup> Luciak, Ilja A. "Gender Equality, Democratization and the Revolutionary Left in Central America: Guatemala in Comparative Context." In *Radical Women in Latin America*, by Victoria Gonzalez and Karen Kampwirth. University Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.

<sup>89</sup> Lykes, Brinton, Beristain, Carlos Martin, and Maria Luisa Perez-Arminan. "Political Violence, Impunity, and Emotional Climate in Maya Communities." *Journal of Social Issues* 63, no. 2 (2007): 369-385.

<sup>90</sup> Berryman, 1987.

giving a refuge for the disenfranchised, it did not become a practical political actor in the same way it did in El Salvador. Despite its rhetorical challenge to the regime, and the safe haven it provided, it did not formally endorse any anti-government movement, nor provide the backbone for any concentrated revolutionary groups.

The atrocities of La Violencia would ultimately necessitate a unification of anti-government forces. The strength and capabilities of the military government far exceeded those of even the best-organized anti-government guerrilla movements. Strength in numbers and unification of ideology was the best chance these forces had at succeeding in defeating government forces, or at least forcing them to negotiate.

### **A Unified Response to La Violencia and Women's Entry into the Political Sphere**

It took opposition forces nearly 20 years to effectively and efficiently organize into a cohesive anti-government movement. Enveloping the four largest leftist revolutionary organizations, the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), the Revolutionary Organization of People in Arms (ORPA), the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), and the National Directing Nucleus of Guatemalan Labor Party (PGT-NDN), the URNG became the organizational and practical face of the resistance in 1982. Under the URNG umbrella, rural farmers and factory workers joined together to fight the regime that had subjected civilians to terror and mass violence. Even as a combined force, the URNG was small in number compared to the Western-backed military, and thus relied on non-



conventional tactics rather than engaging in a large-scale conventional war with Guatemalan forces.<sup>91</sup>

The official declaration of the formation of the URNG spurred the United States to increase its support to Guatemalan government forces, in hopes that it could avoid another close neighbor falling to Marxist guerrillas.<sup>92</sup> The boost in financial and material support allowed the government to bolster its scorched earth practices and led to an upswing in civilian deaths and disappearances. This provoked the URNG to enhance their own militaristic campaign, targeting government officials, military members and prominent landowners. The surge in La Violencia and the responsive increase in anti-government activity also led to a large boost in recruitment for the URNG's revolutionary movement. It was this escalation of the conflict in the 1980s and 1990s brought to light the true nature of women's role in the movement.

Though most prominent in the last 15 years of the war, working-class women in the cities had been involved in anti-government demonstrations in the early years of the civil war.<sup>93</sup> Their contact with politicized labor unions, and the impact that organized strikes had on government officials gave them a platform for participation not available in rural communities. In the early years of the civil war, women made up a significant portion of the FAR.<sup>94</sup> In the other organizations comprising the URNG, women were not

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<sup>91</sup> Cook, Bernard. *Women and War: A Historical Encyclopedia from Antiquity to the Present*. Santa Barbra, CA: ABC-CLIO Publishers, 2006.; Gonzalez-Perez, 2008

<sup>92</sup> Cook, 2006.

<sup>93</sup> Reif, 1986.

<sup>94</sup> Luciak, Gender Equality, Democratization and the Revolutionary Left in Central America: Guatemala in Comparative Context, 2001.

as likely to participate directly in guerrilla activity, taking a more behind-the-scenes approach to organizing and supplying men with combat necessities.<sup>95</sup> While their contributions were significant and arguably essential in these early years, women were not nationally visible in these early movements, nor was there a concerted effort to alter their national civic image.

Prior to the formation of the URNG, the secretive nature of many of the revolutionary groups makes gathering adequate participation demographics difficult. Interviews with women during the final years of the war reveal isolated, yet significant, participation in guerrilla activity as early as 1960,<sup>96</sup> however these cases seem to be the exception more than the rule. With the exception of the FAR, there are no records of women having leadership roles in any anti-government organization.

The formality in record keeping and media accounts of the URNG allow for a more accurate evaluation of the role women played in the movement. The structure of the URNG provided a means by which women and indigenous minority populations could systematically counter the terror imposed by the government and change their place in traditional society. Rather than promoting themselves as crafting a new nationalistic agenda, the URNG appealed to the population with promise of protecting the true Guatemala against the terror of La Violencia, and providing a voice for the families of the disappeared. The URNG claims to have recruited men and women equally,<sup>97</sup> focusing on the importance of domestic protection and collective action, eschewing traditional gender

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<sup>95</sup> Luciak, 2007.

<sup>96</sup> Davis, Miranda. *Third World, Second Sex: Volume 2*. London: Zed Books, 1987.

<sup>97</sup> Landau, Saul. *The Guerrilla Wars of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1993.

biases. Though the official URNG rosters at the time of negotiated settlement put women as approximately 15-20% of guerrillas, interviews with women involved in the campaign have led to assertions that at the height of the campaign women likely comprised 25-30% of the forces.<sup>98</sup> Women's departure from the URNG was a result of a perceived physical necessity, rather than an ideological departure. As their homes and families came under direct attack by government forces, women left official URNG guerrilla instillations to protect their property and kin.

A landless peasant and proletarian movement, the URNG allied itself with Marxist revolutionary ideology. Promoting egalitarianism and collective action, the URNG was a foil to the authoritarian military government's repressive rule.<sup>99</sup> Their inclusive ideology and focus on collective contribution provided the basis for the establishment of a republican discourse within the movement. Though the URNG's Marxist underpinnings created the rhetoric for gender equality and social change, in practice, traditional gender roles and relations were both reinforced and challenged within the URNG.<sup>100</sup> Female leadership in combat units was the rare exception, and though women comprised nearly 1/3 of guerrilla forces, they were frequently plucked from the battlefield to perform communication and intelligence activities. Throughout guerrilla camps, however, "domestic" activities (cleaning, cooking, washing clothes) were virtually equally shared between the sexes. This dichotomy of expectations placed on

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<sup>98</sup> Luciak, 2001.

<sup>99</sup> Allison, Michael E. *Leaving the Past Behind? A Study of the FMLN and URNG Transitions to Political Parties*. PhD Dissertation, Tallahassee: Florida State University, 2006.

<sup>100</sup> Luciak, Gender Equality, Democratization and the Revolutionary Left in Central America: Guatemala in Comparative Context, 2001.

women, coupled with the movement's focus on physical protection over nationalism, hindered women's ability to place themselves as a central figure in a nationalistic dialogue. It also may be a contributing factor to women's desires to leave the official URNG organizations in favor of women-specific movements.

### **Women Mobilize and Create Their Own Space**

Rather than engaging in rhetoric that framed their contribution to the URNG as essential for its success in overthrowing the military government, women utilized the movement's inherent organizational structure to create women-centric groups aimed specifically at addressing their needs. The two most prominent of these groups were the Alianza Femenina Guatemalteca (Guatemalan Feminine Alliance) and the National Coordinating Committee of Guatemalan Widows (CONAVIGUA). The Alliance mobilized around the notions of social change inherent in times of revolution, advocating for women's specific access to the Marxist ideals equal social and economic rights.<sup>101</sup> The women of the Alliance supported the URNG as sympathizers and acting as spies passed on information to URNG leadership, however they formally separated from the revolutionary guerrilla movement. Though they used the social upheaval resulting from the revolution to further women's rights, the Alliance did not make an effort to appeal to a broad national base outside its feminist core.

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<sup>101</sup> Gonzalez-Perez, 2008.

The Alliance's core was even further narrowed in its focus, concentrating its efforts on left-leaning urban and middle class women.<sup>102</sup> Though rural women were more likely to be in a situation needing support, urban and educated women were more likely to be in the position to influence politics. The URNG did not have the resources to provide formal education to its members. Thus in order to most effectively politicize the feminist agenda, the Alliance turned to women who already had a political education to further their cause. Though the Alliance was able to position itself to be included in the ASC for post-conflict negotiations, it did not gain national traction, and its leaders were not included in any revolutionary decision-making.

CONAVIGUA was founded to address the horrors experienced by women whose family members had been killed in massacres or disappeared, and quickly expanded to encompass much of the rural population that was experiencing tragic circumstances. CONAVIGUA focused initially on providing immediate needs to women – food, medicine, clothing and shelter – and morphed into an organization that engaged in organized political dissent and protest.<sup>103</sup> Where the Alliance focused on using the educated to gain a political foothold for feminism, CONAVIGUA focused its efforts in poor and rural areas, gaining particular traction in indigenous regions. The leaders of CONAVIGUA were adherents to liberation theology, and while not officially sanctioned by the Church, the support of its teachings allowed CONAVIGUA to spread throughout women in the rural communities of Guatemala.

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<sup>102</sup> Luciak, Ilja. *After the Revolution: Gender and Democracy in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

<sup>103</sup> Schirmer, Jennifer. "The Seeking of Truth and the Gendering of Consciousness." In *Viva: Women and Popular Protest in Latin America*, by Sarah A. Radcliffe and Sallie Westwood, 30-64. New York, NY: Psychology Press, 1993.

“For the dignity and unity of women” was CONAVIGUA’s official slogan,<sup>104</sup> and under this banner they worked hard to ensure that women were given the provisions necessary to confront the horrors thrust upon them by the government with dignity. CONAVIGUA leaders promoted literacy programs for women, cooperative economic opportunities, and better healthcare for children.<sup>105</sup> In doing so, the organization positioned itself to fill a gap for women it believed had been neglected by the URNG leaders.

CONAVIGUA was successful in directing the dialogue of the URNG to include formally addressing the atrocious human rights violations experienced by hundreds of thousands of civilians at the hands of the Guatemalan military. Using mass protest marches and sit-ins at churches throughout Guatemala,<sup>106</sup> the women of CONAVIGUA raised popular consciousness as to the disregard for universal human rights perpetrated by the current regime. The practical tools for the poor and emphasis on social inclusion led CONAVIGUA to become one of the largest popular organizations in Guatemala. While the URNG was able to provide rural women with protection from La Violencia, the CONAVIGUA provided them with practical necessities to continue their lives. For disenfranchised women, CONAVIGUA was more appealing than the URNG and they provided CONAVIGUA with a natural constituency.

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<sup>104</sup> Gonzalez-Perez, 2008

<sup>105</sup> Schirmer, 1993.

<sup>106</sup> Blacklock, Cathy and Luura MacDonald. "Human Rights and Citizenship in Guatemala and Mexico: From "Strategic" to "New" Universalism?" *Social Politics* 5, no. 2 (1998): 132-157.

## Narrow Negotiation Rhetoric and Post-Conflict Exclusion

On paper, Guatemala is considered “one of the most inclusive, participatory, and human rights-centered negotiation processes, in which women contributed to both the official and civil society-led parallel negotiations.”<sup>107</sup> Women were included in all stages of the official negotiation process, and their civil society participation was praised by both UN Women and the Group of Guatemala Friends.<sup>108</sup> To maintain their rhetoric of inclusive politics, the URNG ensured women’s rights were included as part of the negotiated settlement between the Guatemalan government and the revolutionary guerrilla movements, and even set a woman as their chief negotiator.

The reality, however, is that both the URNG and the government were heavy on talk, and light on actionable substance when it came to ensuring women had equal political and civil rights.<sup>109</sup> The creation of the ASC’s women’s sector effectively isolated women’s issues from greater national identity and security issues. By not integrating with the complete security dialogue, despite their presence in negotiations, women substantively remained on the periphery, their concerns subordinate to traditional notions of primary state institutions and security measures. While the ASC’s women sector ensured that women would have access to education, economic and land ownership rights, their inclusion in the national civic discourse was drafted in “general

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<sup>107</sup> Nakaya, Sumie. "Women and Gender Equality in Peace Processes: From Women at the Negotiating Table to Postwar Structural Reforms in Guatemala and Somalia." *Global Governance*, no. 9 (2003): 459-476.

<sup>108</sup> Diaz and Tordjman, 2012.

<sup>109</sup> Luciak, *After the Revolution*, 2001; Luciak, 2007.

terms that made it unenforceable,”<sup>110</sup> rather than undeniable cooptation into national citizenship dialogue.

Women’s ability to successfully rhetorically frame their service as central to the national interest was further hindered by their lack of inclusion in the DDR program. While a small number of female guerrilla fighters were successfully demobilized and reintegrated into society, most women faced systematic and practical challenges that prohibited their inclusion in the process. The formal education necessary to enroll in skills’ programs, geographic distance to reintegration camps, and lack of childcare facilities all negatively impacted women’s ability to gain the benefits of DDR.<sup>111</sup> Women peace activists and enablers were also denied access to the programs as they did not identify formally with the violent arm of the movement. Further hindering women’s status post-conflict, less than 30% of the promised international aid for reconstruction actually arrived in Guatemala, and it was distributed solely to those who successfully completed their time at DDR camps.<sup>112</sup>

Women’s exclusion from these programs, and the subsequent lack of international validation for their revolutionary contributions, caused them to further depend on the women’s specific organizations created during the war for advancement of their rights. The reliance on women service providers, rather than pushing for essential inclusion in the national dialogue, allowed the new government an opening to excuse away women’s

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<sup>110</sup> Luciak, *Gender Equality, Democratization and the Revolutionary Left in Central America: Guatemala in Comparative Context*, 2001.

<sup>111</sup> Hague, Wenche. *Demobilization and Political Participation of Female Fighters in Guatemala*. Report, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 2007.

<sup>112</sup> Hague, 2007.



claims to increased political and civic enfranchisement. The URNG and the newly formed Guatemalan dialogue both adhered to a republican discourse as witnessed by the increase in civic and political status of the Mayan population as a result of their revolutionary participation and self-promotion as national equals. Contrarily, the exclusive actions of women during and in the immediate aftermath of the conflict did not allow for a persuasive or successful rhetorical strategy, and women were left largely to their own devices to ensure the promotion of their rights and interests.

### **Outcome**

While Guatemalan women were active throughout the civil war and the post-conflict negotiations, they failed to gain widespread political or civic acceptance on the national level. The narrow focus and appeal of women's movements isolated them from the majority of the population and effectively solidified their status as a special interest group without national appeal or relevancy. Though women were able to win increased rights in the immediate short term, they continue to lag behind significantly in the national political dialogue.

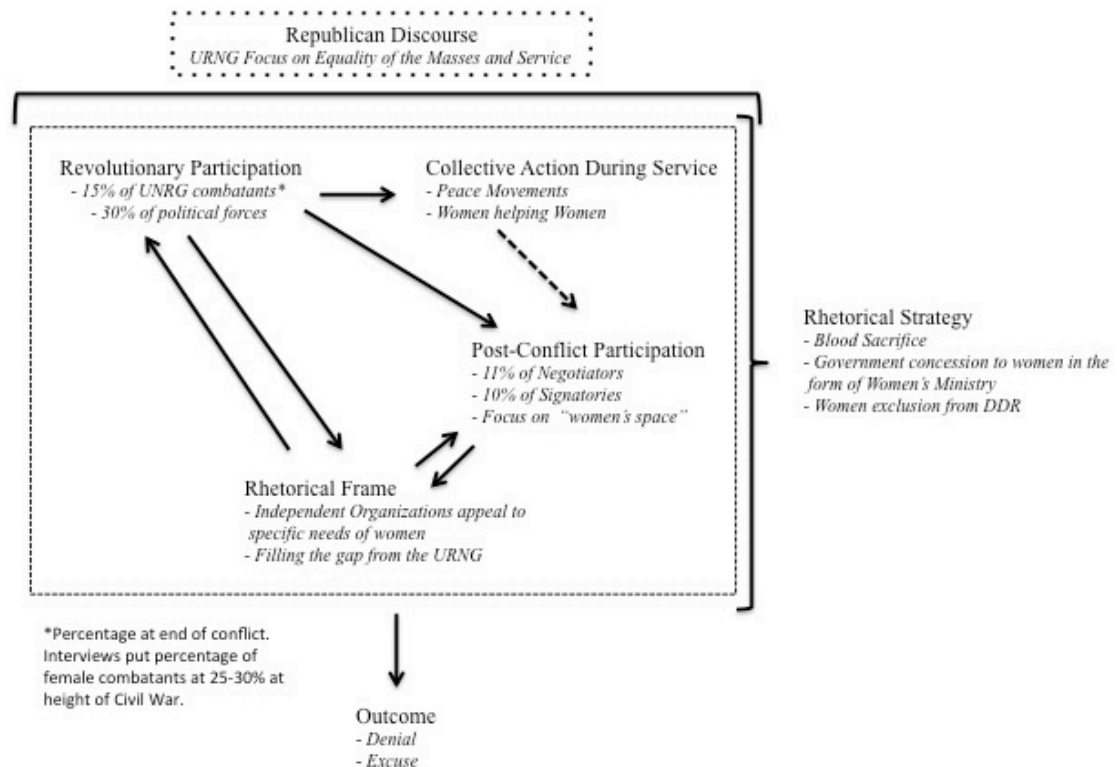


FIGURE 3 – The Failure of Rhetorical Coercion in Guatemala

Though there were individual examples of women successfully appealing to the masses and obtaining national leadership roles, by in large women as a group focused on framing their actions only towards appealing to other women. This narrow focus on women's issues has continued in the post-settlement years. While the women's sector of the ASC has maintained an active presence promoting education, health care and economic rights for women, women's participation, both politically and civically, has steadily declined on the national level. Women make up less than 12% of nationally elected parliamentarians,<sup>113</sup> and women's participation in elections continues to drop.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>113</sup> World Bank. *Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliments*. February 13, 2014. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS> (accessed February 18, 2014).

<sup>114</sup> National Democratic Institute. *Guatemala Country Overview*. February 13, 2014. <http://www.ndi.org/guatemala> (accessed February 18, 2014).

The retreat of women to the space created by the women's sector has denied them advantages of descriptive representation, and reinforced the cycle of underrepresentation and disengagement from civic life.

Women's failure to engage in a successful rhetorical coercion strategy led to a situation in which immediate gains were made at the expense of long-term empowerment.<sup>115</sup> The quick gains women made in education and economic rights as a result of the women's sector disincentivized women from working through the national political system to gain increased empowerment or autonomy. Unlike El Salvador, where women gained increased civic and political stature due to the prominence of women in the national political dialogue, women's issues did not gain national visibility. Prominent women in the women's sector further discouraged women from participating in national politics,<sup>116</sup> rather emphasizing the importance of women continuing to help women. The result of the lack of national political participation and integration into the public discourse has been a stalling of women's political and civic empowerment. Since the initial provisions granted to the women's sector in the 1996 agreement, there has been little advancement in women's rights or their civic inclusion. Political parties, the backbone of Guatemalan politics, have made no effort to appeal to women or include them when crafting their ideological or practical platforms.

The backsliding of women's political participation has become so severe that the women's sector has been headed by a man since 2002. Both the Women's Democracy

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<sup>115</sup> Luciak, *After the Revolution*, 2001

<sup>116</sup> Montenegro, Nineth. "The Challenge of Women's Political Participation in Guatemala." *Mujeres en el Parlamento. Mas Alla de los numerosos* (International IDEA), 2002: 1-5.

Network (WDN) and UN Women have led calls demanding increased participation by women in national politics. In 2012, WDN established the Women's Leadership Schools program,<sup>117</sup> designed to educate and encourage women to increased civic participation. UN Women has concurrently established infrastructure improvement projects aimed at increasing women's ability to participate in local elections.<sup>118</sup> The success of these efforts in reversing the negative trend since the revolution is yet to be seen. While the efforts of WDN and UN Women may provide the external validation necessary to strengthen women's demand for political inclusion, there is still little evidence that their efforts are translating into an organic movement from within Guatemala.

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<sup>117</sup> Women's Democracy Network. *WDN Members in Guatemala Increase Women's Political Participation through Women's Leadership Schools*. February 6, 2012. <http://www.wdn.org/news-events-press-center/events/wdn-members-guatemala-increase-women's-political-participation-throu> (accessed February 18, 2014).

<sup>118</sup> —. *Time for Women to Shape Politics in Guatemala*. September 9, 2011. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2011/9/time-for-women-to-shape-politics-in-guatemala> (accessed February 18, 2014).

## **CHAPTER FOUR: ERITREA – OVERCOMING RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL PATRIARCHY WITH RHETORICAL COERCION IN A REPUBLICAN DISCOURSE**

### **Conflict Background**

During the 30-year struggle for independence from Ethiopia, the “Sister Comrade” warrior of the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) became a central symbol of the movement for independence. This characterization was a sharp departure from Eritrea’s cultural history, and a testament to the changes in social fabric that can take place during revolutionary movements. A nation that culturally associates closely with the Maghreb yet is located on Africa’s Eastern Coast, Eritrea has a unique religious and cultural history among both Arab and African nations. Its strategic location along the Red Sea – “Where Asia and Africa Meet” – has been both a blessing and a curse to its development. A blessing in that it has provided for a rich cultural exchange, and the financial means to support a verity of socioeconomic classes. And yet a curse, as it made the region very enticing for foreign occupying forces and neighboring invaders.

In the mist of this crossroads, Eritrea maintained strong traditional vestiges of its Arab and Islamic heritage. Under colonization, the Italian Catholic patriarchal influence was integrated largely because it was seen as complimentary with traditional indigenous

thinking. Though Muslims and Christians existed in very different social spheres, both promoted traditional male-biased values. Italian colonization also gave Eritrea a “brush with modernity,”<sup>119</sup> and an introduction to the Western ideology in the differentiation between the public and private life. The institutions Italians put in place to further their own economic condition reinforced a gender-biased social order, as men were encouraged to work in the newly modernized economic service sector while women tended to the private family domicile. This “modernized” social order was easily adapted to the Eritrean’s traditional religious and patriarchal values, imposing a formal order to traditional practices.

Eritrea was a tragedy of circumstance as an Italian colony at the end of World War II. Named a British Protectorate as part of the redistribution of Axis assets to the Allied victors, Eritrea struggled as a deeply divided society. In the early 1950s, the divisive nature of Eritrean society grew to include divergent views on the country’s relationship with Ethiopia. The minority highland Coptic Christians favored maintaining formal federation status with Ethiopia, while the lowland Arabs lobbied Britain to grant the complete autonomy and independence. When a UN Resolution recommended that Eritrea become an “autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia,”<sup>120</sup> Eritrean divisiveness heightened. A majority of Eritreans felt that the resolution was more a product of the influence of pro-Western and Christian forces in Cold War geopolitics than an understanding of what was best for the region or the nation.

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<sup>119</sup> Muller, Tanja R. *Making of Elite Women: Revolution and Nation Building in Eritrea*. Oslo: Brill Academic Publishing, 2004.

<sup>120</sup> For a full transcript for the General Assembly’s Sixth Session, 1952 see: <http://www.worldlii.org/int/other/UNGARsn/1952/41.pdf>

Ethiopia, too, believed the resolution was an extension of Cold War politics, and that they had been chosen to keep Africa from falling into communist hands. They used the implied Western-backing as grounds to annex Eritrea and coopt its natural resources and strategic location, violating the terms of federation in the resolution. They claimed the annexation was not an imperial land grab, but an authorized preemptive move to ensure that Eritrea was not adversely influenced by the anti-Western fervor being experienced in countries such as Algeria, Libya, Tunisia and Egypt.

As an annexed part of Ethiopia, Eritrean women were at a double disadvantage. Not only were they subject to the cultural and religious traditions that kept them relegated to the private realm in the roles of “mothers and both protectors and socializers of traditional mores,”<sup>121</sup> but also had all the legal and political disadvantages that come with being a member of an occupied minority. In both Islamic and Coptic societies, women were prohibited from working outside the home, and denied a political voice unless it supported their husband or father. Polygamy and child marriage were commonplace,<sup>122</sup> and women did not have the right to petition for divorce or child custody. The majority of marriages were arranged, and both spousal rape and physical abuse virtually impossible to persecute. Women’s exclusion from the economic, political and civic life extended to education restrictions, resulting in a 95% illiteracy rate for women.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Hale, Sondra. "The State of the Women's Movement in Eritrea." *Northeast Africa Journal* 8, no. 3 (2001): 155-177.

<sup>122</sup> Hale, 2001

<sup>123</sup> Hale, 2001; Global E-SMART Movement. *Human Rights and Eritrea's Reality*. Report, New York: Global E-SMART Movement, 2013.

Ethiopia's blatant disregard for the UN resolution, and the international community's silence on the matter led to a growing estrangement of the already tense relationship between Eritrea and Ethiopia throughout the 1950s. Feeding off the feelings of injustice from being illegally annexed by Ethiopia, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) led the initial anti-Ethiopian movement. The ELF can best be understood as a truly anti-annexation movement, with little appeal to social change or a redefinition of the political order.<sup>124</sup> A large percentage of the membership, and all of the leadership of the ELF was composed of the lowland Muslim males, as they viewed themselves as the biggest losers of Eritrean occupation. Christian and northern highland Eritreans rarely joined the movement for both fear of retribution from Arabs due to the long-held ethnic and religious tensions, and a cultural disconnect with the Muslim lowland way of life. They also expressed hope, at least publically, that Ethiopia would, in due time, grant them independence, or at very the expanded political and economic autonomy guaranteed by the UN Resolution. The highland Christians viewed the independence fight as a frivolous waste of money and human resources.<sup>125</sup> However in 1962, Ethiopian military forces surrounded the Eritrean parliament taking both Christian and Arab parliamentarians and civilians hostage. Any hope of a peaceful road to autonomy disappeared, and a more unified anti-Ethiopia movement, and a new and fervent Eritrean national identity, emerged.

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<sup>124</sup>Johnson, Michael, and Trish Johnson. "Eritrea: The National Question and the Logic of Protracted Struggle." *African Affairs* 80, no. 319 (1981): 181-195.

<sup>125</sup> Johnson and Johnson, 1981.



## **The Emergence of the EPLF and Women's Place in the National Identity**

The historical origins of this Eritrean nationalism are a matter of scholarly debate. The Christian-Muslim schism resonated deep within political and social life in the early years of the anti-Ethiopian movement. The Ethiopian government exploited this schism in order to further control the Eritrean population, pitting Muslim and Christian resistance movements against one another as Ethiopia moved to further occupy Eritrea. What is unclear, however, is whether the impetus to bridge this schism came primarily from young Eritrean intellectuals looking to the socialist tenants of Marxism as a response to the harsh rule of the Western-backed Ethiopia, or if a unification of movements was a necessary domestic response to the increasingly harsh tactics of the Ethiopian regime.<sup>126</sup> Adherents to the former point to the increase in clandestine meetings of Eritrean intellectuals in coffee houses in Sudan and Egypt, where the Enlightenment ideals of self determination and democratic government, fueled by the anti-colonial sentiment prevalent throughout Africa, were freely mixed with Marxist sentiments of social liberation of the proletariat popular in intellectual circles. These meetings, it is argued, sowed the seeds of an inclusive Eritrean nationalism through intellectual and practical discourse. Participants in these meetings viewed social revolution as important as political revolution if Eritrea were to successfully become a thriving nation.<sup>127</sup> Intellectual revolutionaries preached a departure from the traditional and religious rules and regulations in favor of secular rule of law, and a rejection of the Western-grounded

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<sup>126</sup> For a comprehensive theoretical analysis of the Eritrean War for Independence see: Iyob, Ruth. *The Eritrean Struggle for Independence: Domination, Resistance, Nationalism, 1941-1993*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

<sup>127</sup> Müller, 2004.

informal institutions left over from their colonial heritage in favor of the egalitarian civic discourse of Marxism.

Proponents of the latter theory of revolutionary unification point to the increased level in organization and coordination between groups required to effectively resist the attacks from the constantly increasing number of Ethiopian forces.<sup>128</sup> The unity of effort required to fend off the increasingly violent and harsh Ethiopian attacks necessitated overcoming the previously divisive fault lines within society. Those inside Eritrea experiencing the brutal realities of annexation did not have time for the intellectual discourse of the expat communities, and instead resorted to a more primal level of defense of one's home to find common egalitarian ground.

Regardless of the means, for a movement to unite Eritreans and truly grow a nationalistic ideology, it was necessary to overcome challenges on two fronts. First, it had to be strong and organized enough to fight both the rhetoric and the military strength of the Ethiopian imperialists. Second, it had to surmount the cleavages facing Eritrean society. Whether a deliberate intellectual construction or a necessary reactionary movement, the ability of the anti-Ethiopian movement to cross previously irreconcilable chasms was essential for the opening of a republican dialogue and for women's ability to coopt the nationalistic rhetoric. Both the ideological nature and practical tactical practice of the EPLF opened the door to a republican discourse centered around civic duty and national belonging. As the movement grew, all members were expected to contribute

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<sup>128</sup> In addition to military occupation and attacks, the Ethiopian Army sent teachers to Eritrean schools. The presence of teachers in military uniforms led to riots in classrooms with students as young as 10. Ethiopian military personnel also ran Eritrean administration services, such as post offices, water and electric utilities, and in some cases hospitals. This militarization of all aspects of Eritrean society is what proponents of reactionary nationalism point to as the catalyst for overcoming deeply divisive schisms.

fully in whatever capacity they were able. Contribution to the EPLF (and participation in its activities) became synonymous with “being Eritrean,” and the once divisive cleavages began to fall away. Ideologically, the EPLF adopted an official mandate to “teach the various sub-nationalities about one another, instill tolerance and respect for different cultures and religions, and transcend parochial nationalism in a wider Eritrean context.”<sup>129</sup>

The militarization of the EPLF helped to ensure its appeal to the masses. In line with its socialist inclusive rhetoric, the EPLF focused on promoting a lower-class-led organized guerilla movement. With very limited military resources and funding, the EPLF had to band together, despite cultural and religious differences.<sup>130</sup> Limitations on resources, including manpower, provided an opening for women to take an influential and active role in the militaristic arm of the EPLF. Consistent with its liberated social ideology, the militant arm of the EPLF employed women equally at all levels. By the mid-1980s, women comprised over 30% of the fighting forces, and also served as active organizers, teachers, administrators, doctors, mechanics, electricians, tailors, and a whole host of other vital contributors to the revolutionary mission.<sup>131</sup> The mission-focus of every aspect of the movement created an opportunity for women to excel in roles far removed from those traditionally expected of them.

As the war progressed, gender inclusiveness and equality became a prominent component of the EPLF’s official rhetoric. The slogans “Equality through Equal

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<sup>129</sup> Johnson and Johnson, 1981.

<sup>130</sup> Woldemikael, Tekle Mariam. "Political Mobilization and Nationalist Movements: The Case of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front." *Africa Today* 38, no. 2 (1991): 31-42.

<sup>131</sup> Hale, 2001.

Participation” and “No Liberation without Women’s Participation”<sup>132</sup> reinforced the centrality of egalitarianism in the formation of the new Eritrean Nationalism. The EPLF codified this promotion of equality through a series of marriage and family laws. Arranged marriages were outlawed, as were marriages for women under the age of 16. Premarital sex was decriminalized, and men and women of the EPLF, especially fighters, were encouraged to live together and form relationships based on mutual trust, commitment to Eritrea, and love. Muslims and Christians frequently intermarried,<sup>133</sup> solidifying the EPLF’s ability to overcome previously divisive societal chasms.

Communal living arrangements progressed gender equality. Childcare and household chores were not deemed “women’s work,” as equal participation from all, regardless of gender, religion or social class, was preached as important in every facet of life. Children became “children of the revolution”<sup>134</sup> and were raised by wet nurses so mothers could continue to fight.<sup>135</sup> Men who had been injured frequently cooked, cleaned and tended to the laundry. The communal view of life enhanced the discourse of civic duty and obligation as a central tenant to being Eritrean.

Political and civic education was also central to the EPLF’s equality campaign. As women became more involved in the operational life of the movement, it became evident that they had to obtain greater literacy and a basic mathematical training. The EPLF set up formal instructional schools, religiously, socially and gender integrated in

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<sup>132</sup> Woldemikael, 1991.

<sup>133</sup> Bernal, Victoria. "From Warriors to Wives: Contradictions of Liberation and Development in Eritrea." *Northeast African Studies* 8, no. 3 (2001): 129-154.

<sup>134</sup> Bernal, 2001.

<sup>135</sup> Woldemikael, 1991.

order to help break down barriers between Christians and Muslims, urban and rural populations, and men and women. This secular coeducational curriculum revolved around equality, tolerance and duty to nation. The education system reinforced what was being practiced in EPLF-sponsored living arrangements, providing consistency in teaching and practice. EPLF leaders believed that education was the most efficient and effective way of disseminating the new Eritrean identity and culture to the whole of society, and that it should serve as the focal point for a consistent nationalist message.<sup>136</sup> Embedded in principles of nationalistic education was the notion that an educated population was a strong population. Nationalism and a unified, educated polis were seen as essential to ensure Eritrean independence. The education push was successful in both practically and socially educating and integrating the population. By the late 1980s, literacy rates among adult EPLF members was over 90%, and over half of all EPLF members reported being married to someone of a different religion or ethnicity.

The integration and equal participation of all Eritreans in the totality of EPLF activities was essential for crafting a national identity based on an organizational structure that promoted “unity through diversity.”<sup>137</sup> Though the central focus of the EPLF was not a social revolution, in order to achieve independence from Ethiopia and establish a strong independent state, it was necessary to craft a unique and unwavering national identity. With an army strong enough to assure the people that it was capable of militarily securing a free and independent Eritrea, the political wing focused on rallying

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<sup>136</sup> Institute for Democracy in South Africa. *Education for Democracy*. Occasional Paper #46, Cape Town: IDASA, 1994.

<sup>137</sup> Müller, 2004.

the population behind the notion of an egalitarian and strong Eritrean identity. The EPLF fully embraced the argument that “national identity is *the* defining identity of the modern world,”<sup>138</sup> promoting “Eritreanness” as a unique, and valued, characteristic. Change in women’s social status was thus a byproduct of national involvement; a reward for dedicated service and dedication to the new nation.<sup>139</sup>

### **Women’s Mobilization under a Nationalistic Rhetoric**

Eritrean women’s success in redefining their role in society was not an automatic result of their participation in the revolutionary movement. The ability of women to frame their service in such a way that fit the EPLF’s focus on civic obligation and republican discourse created the preconditions for success in making claims for further political inclusion. The National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), established in 1979, served as a conduit for successfully framing women’s service in the EPLF as national civic duty. The official mission of NUEW was not the promotion of women’s interests, but the promotion of women’s empowerment to fulfill the national interest.<sup>140</sup> The NUEW organized itself around the prioritized aims of the EPLF (national independence first, social equality second), and in so doing positioned itself as a vital strategic asset in the independence fight.

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<sup>138</sup> Greenfield and Eastwood, 2009.

<sup>139</sup> Stefanos, Asegedetch. *An Encounter with Revolutionary Change: A Portrait of a Modern Eritrean Woman*. PhD Dissertation, Cambridge: Harvard University, 1988.

<sup>140</sup> Zerai, Worku. "Organizing Women within a National Liberation Struggle: The Case of Eritrea." *Economic and Political Weekly* 29, no. 44 (1994): WS63-WS65.

NUEW's primary focus was on the practical aspects of mobilizing women to join the liberation movement. They did not attack the patriarchy or any system of religious belief, but rather focused on women's willingness and ability to contribute to the EPLF. The NUEW provided women with logistical support and enhanced education services to ensure that women were able to exercise their autonomous right to participation. Especially in more remote areas, women often lacked access to transportation and were thus isolated from the activities of the urban centers of the movement. NUEW members effectively "brought the revolution" to these isolated areas, expanding the nationalist base. As these remote areas were generally very culturally conservative, women were often more effective than men in bringing the message of both national and social liberation. By contact and exposure, more than preaching, women spread the message of freedom and equality as integral to nationalist success. NUEW's focus on the national agenda effectively exposed a much wider population to the women's contributions to the movement than if they had been solely a women-focused organization. The organization helped women to frame themselves as an integral part of the revolution as a whole, and their contributions as necessary as those of their male counterparts.

The structure of the NUEW also encouraged women to view themselves as egalitarian citizens before women. Adopting a merit-based system tied closely to the EPLF, the NUEW rewarded service to the revolution and promotion of nationalistic ideals with increased leadership positions. NUEW's leaders were thus ardent nationalists,<sup>141</sup> not solely feminists. All of the advancements for women – from education to sexual liberation – were presented as beneficial to independence, and the

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<sup>141</sup> Hale, 2001.

strength of the nation as a whole, not a small subset of its members. The NUEW's leadership's adoption of the term "fighter" to refer to all members of the EPLF<sup>142</sup> further erased gender differences in civic duty and elevated women's position as equals in the civic discourse.

Though billed as the National Union of Eritrean *Women* (emphasis mine), one of the NUEW's most influential roles in allowing women to successfully employ rhetorical coercion was to be a "gender eraser."<sup>143</sup> In addition to the universal label of "fighter," women in the EPLF dressed androgynously and took on gender-neutral names.<sup>144</sup> The shedding of the traditionally female physical vestiges provided a tangible symbol of women's dedication to civic duty. The image of the "khaki-clad, gun-toting, female soldier with a gun"<sup>145</sup> became synonymous with Eritrean liberation and national identity and numerous party publications and media outlets used this image as the symbol of supreme national strength. The NUEW's endorsement of blurring gender lines for national advancement, and their ability to use mass media to publicize this ideal, made them an important tool in the women's ability to frame their service in line with the national discourse of citizen service.

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<sup>142</sup> Bernal, 2001.

<sup>143</sup> Mayfair Yang, in her edited volume *Spaces of Their Own: Women's Public Sphere in Transnational China*, introduces the concept of "gender erasure" as a means to conceptualize the top-down promotion of androgyny in both the public and private sphere. The aim is to promote a policy in which "gender becomes and unmarked and neutralized category...loosing its significance as a vessel for political power conflicts." (Yang, Mayfair. *Spaces of Their Own: Women's Public Sphere in Transnational China*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.)

<sup>144</sup> Delenze, Oliver, and Claire LeLoupe. *Women in the Eritrean Revolution: Eyewitness Reports and Testimonies*. Asmara: National Union of Eritrean Women, 1982.

<sup>145</sup> Bernal, 2001.



## **Inclusive Negotiations and Drafting a New Nation**

The role women took in shaping the new national identity during the revolution continued in its immediate aftermath. The androgynous characterization of the EPLF “fighter” extended into leadership roles, and several women made up the EPLF’s delegation to negotiate the formal independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia.<sup>146</sup> Many of negotiators were the same women who had participated as fighters in the movement. As with their service in revolution, women framed their participation in these negotiations, and their subsequent participation in the writing of the new constitution, as that of national duty, not a means by which they would pursue particular women’s issues. During the ceasefire negotiations and subsequent debates on the political shape of the nation, EPLF leaders, both male and female, were focused on ensuring that the ideals of the revolution, and the resulting social equality achieved, were codified in post-revolutionary society.

The Constitution-writing committee (44% women) in particular was tasked with ensuring that the agro-authoritarian system of rule would not reemerge to undermine the egalitarian society won through over 3 decades of protracted struggle. The basis of the new government is summed up in the provision that “the State shall, through participation of all citizens, ensure national stability and development by encouraging democratic dialogue and national consensus; and by laying a firm political, cultural and moral foundation of national unity and social harmony.”<sup>147</sup> The focus on rule of law,

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<sup>146</sup> The negotiations formally recognized Eritrea’s right to hold a referendum on independence from Ethiopia. The referendum, held in April 1993, passed by over 99%.

<sup>147</sup> Government of Eritrea. "The Constitution of Eritrea." *The Constitution of Eritrea*. Asmara: Government of Eritrea, May 23, 1997.

citizenship participation, national unity and political dialogue served, potentially inadvertently, to dismantle the remnants of feudal land relations and to attack the material basis for male domination, particularly in rural, agrarian society, where vestiges of traditional society prevailed even post-revolution.<sup>148</sup>

The promotion of women's rights via rule of law was achieved as a beneficial side effect of women's efforts both during and after the revolution. By positioning themselves as vital to the independence effort, women were able to successfully engage in the republican dialogue and make claims to political power the new government could not deny without undermining the basis of the laws on which the country was newly resurrected. The emphasis the EPLF leadership put on service to country as a requirement for belonging, and the focus on duty woven throughout the constitution provided the necessary frame for women's claims to full equality through their service.

In addition to the claims made to the political elite based on their service during the revolution, women's service was validated by the international community. The DDR process had provision specifically on former female EPLF soldiers, and was designed to take into account particulars that may impact women's ability to participate. In implementing this DDR program, the facilitators took the universal and androgynous use of the word "fighter" seriously, making self-identification as such the only precondition for participation. Removing requirements for weapons turn-in or proof of combat experience removed some of the potential stigma of being involved in the DDR program. Despite the acceptance of female fighters within the movement, there was

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<sup>148</sup> Connell, Dan. "Strategies for Change: Women and Politics in Eritrea and South Africa." *Review of African Political Economy* 25, no. 76 (1998): 189-206.

skepticism as to how they would be accepted by civilian employers.<sup>149</sup> By creating an indiscriminate system, participation in the DDR program became more widespread, and therefore less stigmatized. DDR also focused on socializing civilian society to the demobilized and reintegrated “fighters.” By integrating civilian society into DDR classes and workshops, demobilized fighters became seen as patriotic citizens who had dedicated their lives to a free Eritrea<sup>150</sup> rather than disconnected ruthless fighters.

The DDR program also focused on promoting and highlighting the skills fighters gained as part of the EPLF. Enhancements on technical skills gained during the years of conflict served to justify the civic dialogue of the EPLF. In a continuation of EPLF policy, DDR programs conducted skills enhancements without regard to traditional gender roles. Socialized, demobilized fighters were able to present themselves as valuable assets to the newly forming independent civil sector as well as the political leadership of Eritrea.

Due to the inclusive nature of the practical mechanics of the DDR (for example, childcare provisions, married couples attending together, educational programs) virtually all self-identified female fighters completed the DDR program.<sup>151</sup> The validation women received from participation in the program strengthened the ability to frame their service as beneficial to the formation of the nation. The international acceptance of women as

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<sup>149</sup> de Watteville, Nathalie. *Addressing Gender Issues in Demobilization and Reintegration Programs*. Occasional Paper, Washington, DC: World Bank Africa Program, 2002.

<sup>150</sup> Mehrreteab, Amanual. *Veteran Combatants do not Fade Away: A Comprehensive Study on two Demobilization and Reintegration Exercises in Eritrea*. Report, Bonn: Bonn International Center for Conversion, 2002.

<sup>151</sup> Mehrreteab, 2002

valid citizen contributors also put pressure on the new government and civil society to ensure their continued inclusion in all facets of civil society.

## Outcome

The ability of Eritrean women to frame their revolutionary participation as necessary to the promotion of the new national identity, coupled with the external validation conferred on them by the international community through the DDR program created a situation in which the new government could not deny their claims to complete political participation without undermining the civic principles on which the new nation was founded.

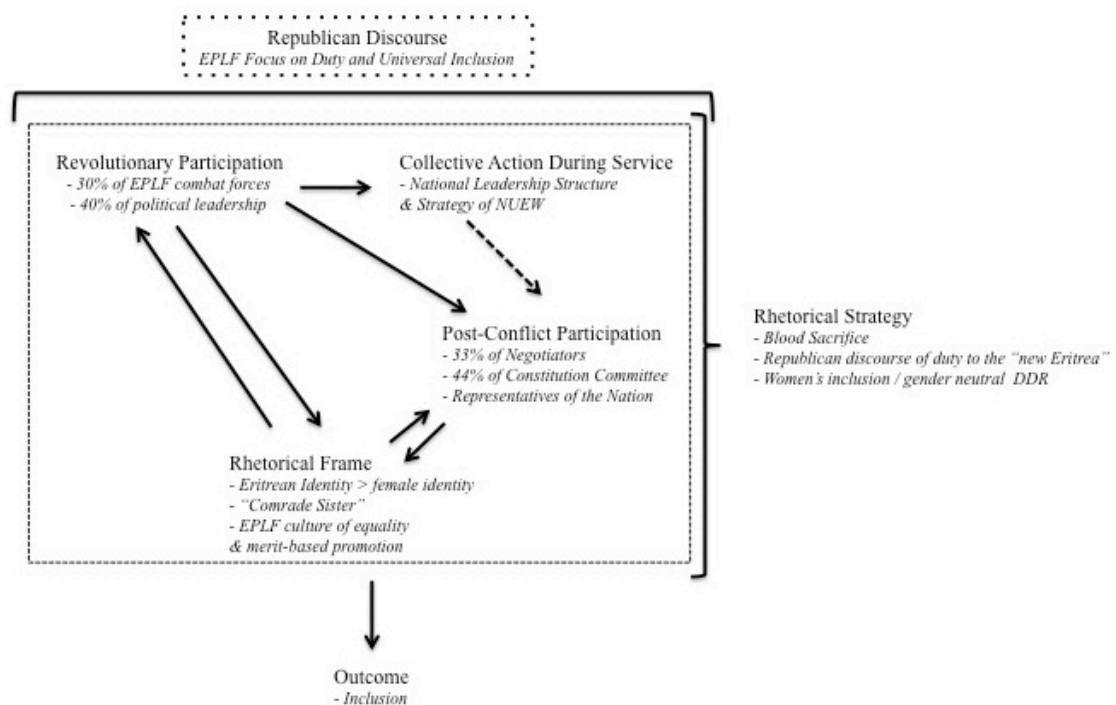


FIGURE 4 – Women's use of Rhetorical Coercion in Eritrea

Figure 4 outlines the means by which women in Eritrea were able to successfully use rhetorical coercion by framing their participation in such a way as to gain an

advantage through their rhetorical strategy. The EPLF's focus on duty and service to the movement as a means of forging an Eritrean identity opened the door for a republican discourse to begin. Women's continual emphasis on national duty while serving, the national focus of the NUEW, and the seamless adoption of the androgynous "fighter" moniker fit easily into the EPLF's egalitarian ideology, allowing women the ability to frame their service in such a way as to ensure a rhetorical advantage. Their continued identification as national, not female, actors has helped to ensure that their contributions have a lasting impact on the Eritrean political system.

Since independence, women have held a minimum of 20% of elected seats in parliament,<sup>152</sup> without a national quota.<sup>153</sup> Approximately 25% of appointed ministers and international diplomatic missions as women, compared to an international average of 5.5%.<sup>154</sup> The NUEW is also still active as a policy advocacy group. True to its origins, NUEW focuses on the national (and increasingly international) benefits of advancing what have traditionally been described as "women's issues."

Women's presence in government and prioritization of a nationalist agenda has led to great strides for women's rights in the country. Shortly after independence, Eritrea became a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Gender equality in education has been stressed, with adult

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<sup>152</sup> World Bank. *Proportion of Seats Held by Women in National Parliaments*. February 13, 2014. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS> (accessed February 18, 2014).

<sup>153</sup> Some of the more leftist parties have adopted voluntary quotas for their candidate lists, however there is no requirement to adhere to them. Regional and local assemblies, however, have a 30% quota for women. On average, women hold 38-40% of seats in these governing bodies.

<sup>154</sup> UN Women. *Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly*. Report, New York: UN Women, 2004.

female literacy now above 75% (compared to 5% before the revolution) and over 92% of adults enrolled in continuing education programs are women.<sup>155</sup> An emphasis on health care reform has aided in the infant mortality rate decreasing by over 40%, and immunizations rates of children increasing by over 90%. The Eritrean Department of Health Services reports that in the years since 1996, over 65% of women have given birth in a hospital, and over 80% have had access to a midwife or nurse to assist with rural or home births.<sup>156</sup> While the gender gap in Eritrea is not yet closed, the advancements made by women in the Eritrean government to further the condition of women nation-wide is a testament to the power of national integration for the promotion of women's rights.

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<sup>155</sup> The NUEW keeps an updated record of women's education and political programs available at: <http://www.nuew.org>

<sup>156</sup> Access to Eritrea's health records available via World Health Organization at: <http://www.who.int/countries/eri/en/>

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND WAY AHEAD

The enduring value of a nationalistic frame for revolutionary service is highlighted in comparison of pre- and post- revolutionary conditions in the cases studied.

	El Salvador	Guatemala	Eritrea
<b>Women in Politics Before Revolution</b>	4%	3%	0%
<b>Women in Combat Roles</b>	~30%	~15-20%	~30-40%
<b>Women in Political Leadership</b>	~40%	~30-40%	~40%
<b>Collective Action</b>	CO-MADRES, Gendered Revolutionary Bridges	The Alliance, CONAVIGUA	NUEW
<b>Base of Support</b>	Liberation Theology	<i>Women Serving Women</i>	All Eritreans as “Fighters”
<b>Negotiation Participation (%)</b>	12-13%	10-11%	33-44%
<b>Negotiation Participation (Role)</b>	Representative of Nation or Regional Group	<i>Women’s Sector of the ASC</i>	Representative of Nation
<b>DDR</b>	30% of Total Combatants, Inclusive of all of society	<i>Practical Barriers to Entry</i>	All “Fighters” included
<b>Women in Politics After Revolution</b>	16%	13%	21%
<b>Women in Politics Today</b>	26%	8%	25%
<b>Notable Changes</b>	Health and Survival Ranking “Special Law” as a National Priority	<i>Decrease in Electoral Participation, Stagnation of education and employment</i>	Literacy, Education and Health Care Reform as National Priorities

FIGURE 5 – Comparison of Women Pre- and Post- Revolution

As seen in Figure 5, the narrow appeal of women in Guatemala has led to a condition of backsliding and stagnation of women's issues, whereas in Eritrea and El Salvador the inclusion of women as national actors in politics has led to an increase in rights and a strengthening of their situation in many areas. Political rights were thus not gained at the expense of civic rights in other realms, but led to their promotion.

Though revolutionary movements and associated guerrilla organizations do not necessarily contain the formality seen in military organizations to be the "school for the nation,"<sup>157</sup> they, too, possess the characteristics to make them a successful civic-based nationalistic school. The socialization, contact and political education that occurs at the individual level for each revolutionary guerrilla, coupled with the republican discourse and social openings frequently characterizing times of revolution, make these movements a viable forum in which minorities can employ rhetorical coercion to improve their political station. For women, as shown in both El Salvador and Eritrea, embracing and embodying the full spirit of nationalism, and putting the movement's interests before those that purely benefit women, creates the preconditions in which women are most likely to successfully use rhetorical coercion to gain political inclusion based on their revolutionary contributions. The national cohesion developed as a natural side effect of the effort and expense required to enact revolutionary change,<sup>158</sup> and necessary to engage with a broad national polis, is broken if women solely appeal to a narrow female subset of society. As witnessed in Guatemala, appeal to a narrow group of the polis or focus on a narrow set of issues provides an opening for the government to dismiss or excuse

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<sup>157</sup> Krebs, 2006

<sup>158</sup> Skocpol, 1994.



claims for increased political participation. In addition to a republican discourse, the successful cases of rhetorical coercion highlight four conditions that increase the likelihood of women being able to employ a successful rhetorical strategy.

First, movements with wide popular support for the social changes that result from their ideologies provide a broad, cohesive base to which women can appeal. In a broad sense, success for a revolutionary guerrilla movement is based nearly as much on gaining popular support from a large cross-section of the citizenry as pure military might.<sup>159</sup> Getting popular buy-in to the group's ideology is as important as proper military training. During the conflict, anti-government movements rely on the population for both financial and logistical support, and in times of transition from guerrilla group to political party, popular support and appeal is essential for the longevity of revolutionary change. As the broad civilian population acts as enablers to the revolutionary movement, they, in turn, are socialized to the ideological changes occurring within the movement. This socialization reinforces the fact that ideological appeal is arguably a powerful and necessary tool political actors have to propagate their agenda and shape the political landscape to their advantage.<sup>160</sup> The ability of women to successfully employ rhetorical coercion also relies on popular buy-in to the ideological changes occurring during the revolution. As highlighted very clearly in Eritrea, a polis fully embracing a new social structure and national identity provides women with a large base from which they can garner support. The more wide-spread the popular acceptance of social changes the more

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<sup>159</sup> Walter, Barbra. "Designing Transitions from Civil War: Demobilization, Democratization and Commitments to Peace." *International Security* 24, no. 1 (1999): 127-155.

<sup>160</sup> Krebs, Ronald, and Patrick Thaddeus Jackson. "Twisting Tongues and Twisting Arms: The Power of Political Rhetoric." *The European Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 1 (2007): 33-66.

accepting a population will be of changing gender roles. Thus, women are more likely to be successful in employing a rhetorical strategy with a broad base of support for the new national discourse and widespread social changes.

Second, women must be able to successfully harness the strength of the costly-signal their participation creates in disseminating their message to a broad and diverse cross-section of the population. In all three cases, women's participation in revolutionary movements was such that it broke the status quo. Breaking gender-biased norms in both action and speech, and putting their lives on the line for a nationalistic cause, provided a sufficiently strong signal<sup>161</sup> to impact the preexisting social, political and civic order. The cases of El Salvador and Eritrea show the result of capturing the strength of this signal via deliberate rhetoric. The conscious effort by women to adapt and insert themselves into the national dialogue and use the resources at their disposal to appeal to a large popular base, ensured the gains made during revolutionary service were preserved in the post-revolutionary order. The Salvadorian women's ability to successfully employ gendered revolutionary bridges, and the Eritrean women's national acceptance as a result of the NUEW's role as a gender eraser highlight the impact of using rhetoric with mass appeal to reinforce their costly signal. In both these instances women were able to use the strength of their status quo breaking new position in society as a means to reach groups that otherwise may be been excluded. These actions greatly contributed to women's success in ensuring there would not be a return to the pre-revolutionary status quo gender norms. The case of women in Guatemala, conversely, shows how

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<sup>161</sup> Posner, Eric A. "Symbols, Signals, and Social Norms in the Politics and the Law." *The Journal of Legal Studies* 27, no. S2 (1998): 765-797.

exclusionary or narrowly focused rhetoric undermines and detracts from signal strength, ultimately isolates women.

Third is the reinforcement of the fact that expanded and inclusive rights for women are essential for the national interest and do not detract from the rights held by men. Successful appeal to the national interest and security reinforces the collaborative nature of women's service and strengthens the national cohesion necessary for post-conflict institution building.<sup>162</sup> Removing special interest divisions from political claims serves to ultimately better further the interests of minority groups, as their interests become seen as vital to the whole of society. For women, successfully intertwining their interests into those of the nation as a whole, guaranteed the longevity of their inclusion, and the furthering of their rights. Integration into the national dialogue also ensured that gains made during the revolutionary movement would not be static, but continue to evolve. Women's participation at the national level encouraged increased civic local civic participation, expanding the revolutionary gains made. The fact that issues of women's health and family law were brought to the national ballot in El Salvador and Eritrea is a testament to the importance of integrating minority issues into the national dialogue, as it is an organic way for women to ensure their voice is heard.

Finally, validation from an external public – either foreign or domestic – strengthens rhetorical claims and helps ensure their irreversibility. Validation helps in de-stigmatizing the status quo changes brought about during revolutionary participation, and aids in the transition from revolutionary to post-conflict life. Full inclusion in DDR programs, prioritized continuation of childcare and education programs and equality of

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<sup>162</sup> Walter, 1999.

access to economic incentives for post-conflict reconstruction are all means by which women's participation was successfully validated by external communities. The more players that have a stake in the continuation of women's full national inclusion, the higher the cost of denying or reversing this position becomes.

The conscious choice women made in framing their revolutionary participation (not to mention their choice to participate in the first place) negates the universal inevitability promoted by the essentialist view of women's role in society. Women did not participate solely as "natural peacemakers," in any of the cases presented. Rather, they autonomously joined violent movements when they saw it as best serving their political interests, and used whatever tactics they believed would best lead to successfully meeting their objectives. The diversity of their actions show that they were in no way passive or homogenous responders to biological determinism.<sup>163</sup> And though women engaged in peace negotiations, they primarily did so as representatives of their movements, having proven their necessity and worth via their actions, not as natural agents of peace brought in to placate warring men. This reality strengthens the constructivist claim that gender roles are not inevitable and inalterable slots that women must fill in society, but rather changeable, superficial constructions. Women's conscious choices during revolution – from the initial choice to serve to the way in which they frame their service – greatly contributed to deconstructing traditional gender-biased social and political constructions and allowed for a change in paradigm.

These findings on rhetorical coercion and gender construction raise several potential future research questions. The case studies chosen here all had Marxist-based

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<sup>163</sup> Fukuyama, 1998

ideologies, a purposeful choice to introduce control. Marxist revolutions inherently create social openings and upheaval from the status quo. The sharp change in social politics and civic identity, and the emphasis on gender and class equality naturally lends itself to the use of rhetorical coercion. Examining the ability of women to use rhetorical coercion in non-Marxist revolutions would provide a more complete picture of the circumstances under which women can most successfully use their revolutionary participation to gain increased political recognition. Extending the scope to include both violent and nonviolent maximalist movements would also add value to the exploration of women's use of rhetorical coercion.

The cases examined here were also all deliberately chosen because their negotiated settlement took place prior to the adoption of UNSCR 1325. With no requirement in place for women to be involved in any part of the negotiation or transition process, it can be more reasonably assumed that women's participation was organic. In future studies of women's revolutionary participation, the external influence of UNSCR 1325 must be taken into account. In examining revolutions post-UNSCR 1325, the model of rhetorical coercion will have to be changed slightly to account for the influence of foreign actors and the strength of international pressure. The current emphasis on adhering to the provisions of UNSCR 1325 underscores the need for continued research on women's involvement in revolutionary movements and their ability to translate it into political empowerment. As practitioners push for women's inclusion in conflict settlements and the politics of newly formed governments, it is essential that they are armed with robust data to back up their implementation decisions.

While a significant gender gap still exists in virtually every country, the cases of El Salvador and Eritrea highlight a way in which it can be lessened. In both of these countries, the trend line of their gender gap shows a constant improvement in women's political, economic, education and health care opportunities.<sup>164</sup> The ability of women to integrate themselves into the national dialogue and make women's issues legitimate and important national issues has contributed to this positive trend. While rhetorical coercion will not erase gender-biased inequality, it is an important tool for women in the quest to close the gender gap.

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<sup>164</sup> World Economic Forum. *The Global Gender Gap Report*. Annual Report, Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2013.

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